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SERMONS.

SERMON I.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE UNITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

We have seen and been witness, that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.—1 St. John, iv. 14.

THAT the beneficence of the Eternal Father has been pleased to send “his Son to be the Saviour of the world,” is a truth, which not only you and I, my brethren, but the whole christian universe acknowledges with the apostle,—a truth which forms the great basis of our future expectations, and the best source of our present comforts. It was the commemoration of this awful mystery, and the glorious evidences which accompanied its fulfilment that during the series of our late frequent festivals, have successively engaged our attention, and warmed our piety. During this series, indeed, not only

the Catholic church, but every denomination of sect or heresy has, in a similar manner, placed the conflicts and triumphs of our Redeemer before their imaginations—his conflicts, in order that their severity might awaken in their hearts the feelings of gratitude—his victories, in order that their lustre might animate their minds with confidence—in order that all, like the apostle, might see, that “*the Father had indeed sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.*”

The belief of the great mystery of our redemption is therefore the general belief of the christian universe. There is too another belief, which being hinged upon the above, and forming an immediate deduction from it, is equally with it, admitted as a general tenet. It is this, that as Christ Jesus came down from his eternal throne to be a *Saviour*, he came down also to be a *legislator*—came down to establish, and has actually established, a society on earth, to which he has communicated the mysteries of his mercy, imparted the dispensation of his authority, and suggested the maxims of his heavenly wisdom. This society is what we, and indeed every sect with us, denominate the *Church*. The evidence of the necessity of such a society, where men are to be linked together in the profession of truth and the practice of genuine piety, and the proofs of the establishment of such a society, are so incontrovertible, that not even the inconsistency or indo-

cility of heresy has ventured to contest them. Of course, again, there exists, by the acknowledgment of every denomination of christians, *one distinct society* of men professing the true faith, and adoring the mysteries which Jesus communicated to his apostles—living under the authority which he established—retaining the maxims, and participating in the means, which are the sources of grace and sanctification.

Thus far does the christian world agree. But, alas! the misfortune is, it is thus far only. Acknowledging the existence of a true church, it is divided about that portion of society, to whom the happy privilege of being the true church exclusively belongs: divided, subdivided, and frittered into countless sects, each sect arrogates it to itself; and amid the wildest confusion of doctrines, some of them impious, and some absurd—all of them at variance, and all, save one, erroneous—each, with equal confidence, is convinced that itself alone is sacred and divine.

My brethren, when we reflect on the goodness of that Being who has done so much to purchase our salvation, it is not natural to suppose that he would shed the darkest clouds on the path that conducts us to it; else his tenderness would have been wanting in a very essential point. Having imparted to us his truths to be our guides, it is not easy to conceive that he would render the medium

of attaining them impenetrable; else the rejection of them would be excusable, and the profession of error harmless. But having said, "*Whoever shall not believe shall be damned,*" (as the protestant versions translate the 16th verse of the xvi. chap. of St. Mark;) having ordained, that whoever is not a member of the true church, shall be considered "*as a heathen and a publican,*" it is not only not natural or easy to imagine that his goodness would not establish some indication to point it out,—it is *impossible* that it should not—it is repugnant to his goodness, and to his justice itself, that he should not; else he would reprobate us without a cause, and "damn" us without a crime. If there be ought in reason, or in the nature of religion, that is evident, it is the maxims which I here establish. And the consequence, therefore, is, that the mercy which has poured the beam of truth upon mankind, the wisdom which has reared the divine fabric of the church, must also have instituted the means by which we may discover them;—must have appointed marks by which the "House of God" may be distinguished from the conventicles of falsehood; by which not only doubt, but the scruples of timidity, or the misapprehensions of ignorance may be either prevented or removed. In an interest so seriously important as that of our salvation, there should be nothing dubious.—Under a mandate so imperious as that to which I have al-

luded, in order to cover the divine providence from the imputation of injustice, there should be nothing equivocal, uncertain, or ambiguous.*

Hence it has pleased that wisdom which formed the christian institute, to establish indications, by which not only learning and ability, but even igno-

*If even the above arguments were not true ; if it were admitted that the providence of God were neither interested, nor obliged to point out the path of truth, nor to guide us by the hand to the establishment which his mercy had formed for our salvation; yet, in an interest so important, it should seem essential, not only that men should labour to discover, but that their wisdom should have fixed upon some given criterions, by whose evidence or evident probability, the possession of these objects might be ascertained and made secure. The discovery, to the feelings of good sense, should certainly appear the most interesting, that prudence, industry, or learning, could attempt to realise. For without it, when we consider all the shades of the human character, its passions, its prejudices, and its interests, not only must every form of error continue to subsist, but every form of error is defensible; doubt, where there should be none, becomes an act of prudence; and instability, which the apostle declares to be a crime in faith, an act of necessity. It is not indeed, that men may not misapply or pervert the plainest maxims, but it is true, that in religion, much more than in any other object, maxims, as much as may be, evident and incontestible, should be established, in order that their brightness may dissipate the illusions of error; their stability, like an anchor, prevent the evagations of the mind; and their wisdom, in cases of dispute, be the standard to which good sense may confidently appeal.

rance and simplicity, where they are sincere and devoid of prejudice, may discover it. I will not attempt to describe all these indications. They are various, and measured to all the varieties of the human character. Induced by the evidence of the necessity of such indications, and by the evidence of their existence, there are not any among the numberless sects of christians but admit and affect to venerate them. They admit, it is true, some of them, certain indications, which others contest as unsatisfactory and obscure, and which certainly are both unsatisfactory and obscure. However, along with these, they also admit other indications, which are satisfactory and clear. There are none of the sects of christianity but admit the Nicæan creed into the canon of their belief. It is peculiarly sacred to the legal establishment of this country, and "*proved,*" it is said in the 8th of its 39 articles, "*by the most certain warrants of holy scripture.*" Now in this sacred instrument, along with the profession of the most important articles of revelation, it is distinctly acknowledged, that there exists marks which exclusively belong to the true church, and by which, among the numberless conventions of fanaticism, fraud, and superstition, it may be distinguished from every other institute. The marks which the creed selects, are four—unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. "*I believe in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolical church.*" Confining our attention,

therefore, to the consideration of these four evidences only, which are owned to be divine, I will endeavour to point out in which establishment they subsist; whether in our own, or in the establishments which have lately separated from it. My plan shall be extremely simple. After having explained the nature of each indication, I will merely apply it alternately to the catholic and the protestant establishments. The application will enable you to compare them; the comparison will shew the contrast; and the contrast point the conclusion, that wisdom and piety should deduce.

Thus, my brethren, I have conducted your reason through a series of propositions that are incontestible and clear; that have reason and the attributes of the Divinity for their basis. I have laid before you the principles which form the foundation of our future reasoning, and which even our adversaries have tied themselves to venerate as divine. I have said nothing, hitherto, but what is either evident or acknowledged.

However, although consequently, I have arrived at that point where I might begin the series of my reasonings and comparisons, yet I will premise a few general observations before I do it. I will observe, that however important the discussion may be to you, my brethren, or however consonant to your principles,—to our dissenting brethren it is much more important still, because uncertainty is

the necessary appendage to their faith (A)—it is more consonant to their principles, because discussion is the professed foundation of their belief. (B) I will also observe, although this circumstance too is evident—that among all the various methods, by which truth or the true church may be ascertained, I have chosen that which is the most obvious, the most easy, and the most rational. (C.)

I can easily anticipate what in you must be the effect of these discourses. Beholding the acknowledged marks of the true church applied to our holy institute, and finding them all transcendently conspicuous in it—seeing them applied to the sects which have separated from it, and finding them all notoriously deficient—remarking our venerable fabric compared with the modern conventicles of the reformation, and observing it rise in awful magnificence above them, you will experience the pleasing sensation of your own security, and gratitude to the Being who has rendered you so secure; you will exult in the splendid evidences which every where beam upon you, and you will pity the unhappy blindness of the men who refuse to see them.

Not that I wish your triumph, or the sensations which you feel, to be the triumph of vanity, or the sensations of contempt for those who do not possess them. Feeling for your happiness, I wish you only to be grateful to him, who of his infinite mercy,

has bestowed so distinguished a favor on you; and feeling that others possess it not, I wish you to weep over their misfortune, and to supplicate the God of truth, that he will bid those rays which beam upon you, beam also upon them;—I wish you fervently to intreat him, that he will dissipate their prejudices, remove the illusions of their education, and introduce them to walk with you in those paths that conduct to heaven. Gratitude is the proper effect which the conviction of truth should produce towards God; and charity the feeling which it ought to produce towards men.

Entering then upon the discussion of the marks of the true church, I will, to day, confine myself to the first of them—*its unity*: and following, as I remarked before, a plan extremely simple, I will shew you, first, that unity is an essential characteristic of the true religion; 2dly, that it is eminently distinguishable in the religion which we profess.

To conceive that unity is an essential characteristic of the true church, we need only to reflect a moment upon the nature of the church, the nature of the principles upon which it is founded, and the nature of the end for which it is established. The church is the kingdom of Jesus Christ; its foundations are the maxims of eternal truth; its end the union of man with God by the ties of duty and of man with man by the chains of love. *For this, says St. John, did Jesus die, that he might*

gather together in one the children of God. (xi. 52.) Or as the great Redeemer himself expresses it, *that all may become one, as thou, O Father, art in me, and I in thee, so they also may be one in us.*—(John xvii. 21.) Reason cannot conceive any species of unity more intimate than this. (D)

But we will form our ideas of the necessity and nature the unity which should mark the church, from another principle, which, though perhaps less forcible, may perhaps be more striking to your imaginations. It was the design of God, when he sent down his Divine Son to purchase our salvation, that he should form on earth a kingdom, which was to resemble his eternal empire in heaven.—Formed upon the same plan, and by the same principles, it was meant to be its image, and to reflect its beauty. It was meant to represent its harmony and its peace,—meant to exhibit in the various ranks and orders, which compose its hierarchy and its members, the regularity and subordination which mark the various gradations of the seats of Sion. *Come hither,* said the angel to St. John, *and I will shew thee the bride and the spouse of the Lamb; and he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and he shewed me that great city (the church) the holy Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, from God.* (Rev. xxi. 10.) And hence those frequent appellations and attributes which the pro-

phets and the scriptures give it, *the fair one, the spotless, the beautiful, the strong.*

Wherefore, planned as the church is by the dictates of eternal wisdom, and formed upon the model of the seats of eternal union, it is impossible to imagine that the Being who established it would not also establish and interweave in its constitution, the means by which its beauty and integrity should be retained. It would even be an impeachment of his wisdom to suspect the contrary. For not even human wisdom, if it had the power, would be so improvident and indiscreet, after having formed a kingdom, or established a constitution, as not also to establish the means which would be necessary for its preservation, and for perpetuating the benefits, which it was its object to produce.

Of course, considering the church as the kingdom of Jesus Christ; or to speak perhaps in terms more intelligible to your reason, considering the church as a society of men united together by Jesus Christ—submitting to the authority which he has established,—believing the doctrines which he has taught,—revering the worship which he has inculcated, and observing the practice which he has ordained—it is also essential if such society be destined to continue to subsist—it is essential that there also should exist some tie, by which it may be held together, and the veneration of its authority, the purity of its doctrines, the sancity of its worship, and the cultivation of its

practices be maintained, unchanged, unimpaired, and unadulterated. Not only does the nature of any thing like a society, or the first notions of a society, include the idea of such a tie; but where objects so sacred as the above are to be retained, and to be retained in their original uniformity, such tie is evidently the dictate of necessity. Without it, such is the character of the human mind, and such the nature of the human heart—unity of belief is an absurdity, and subordination and impossibility. The mind, without it, as it is free, will wander through all the mazes of error; and the heart unrestricted will wanton in licentiousness. In reality, if in temporal governments, such tie, or the institution of such power, be the only principle of unity and subordination, such an institution is evidently much more essential in the sacred establishment of religion.

The evidence of the necessity of the means of preserving unity, is the evidence that such means do actually exist; and to the feelings of wisdom it might even appear useless to produce the proofs of their existence. However, just to satisfy doubt, if any have the weakness to contest them, I will very superficially point them out. From the multitude of his disciples, it is well known Jesus in the first place selected twelve. *He called unto him, says St. Luke, his disciples, and he chose twelve of them, whom he named apostles.* (vi. 13.) By this selec-

tion, his wisdom thought proper to commence the unity of his establishment. Soon after, from amid the twelve, he selected only *one*.—*Thou art Peter*, said he, *and upon this rock I will build my church; and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, &c.* (St. Mat. xvi. 18, 19.) By this selection he perfected the unity. For, as it is evident that the words of Christ are addressed to *Peter only*, and referred to *Peter only*, so it is evident that they express a prerogative distinct from any which his wisdom had conferred upon the rest of the apostles, and peculiar to Peter; and again evident, therefore, as it is admitted by all those who admit the reality of the above prerogative, that they imply the institution of a power, which was destined to be perpetuated in the church. *Peter*, says St. Austin, *who in his supremacy represented the whole church, receives alone the keys, which are destined to be for ever transmitted to his successors.* (E)

Yes, I repeat it, if the religion which Jesus had preached to mankind were intended to be permanent, if its principles are immutable, its worship incorruptible, it is evident that the same wisdom which imparted it, must also establish an authority to preserve it,—an authority like that which I have proved, was communicated to St. Peter, *independent and supreme*; which forming a centre of unity for the preservation of the integrity of faith, is also

a principle of subordination for the purity of discipline—a barrier against innovation, and the basis of stability. (You may indeed remark, that the stability of the church is forcibly foretold, immediately after its establishment. *Thou art Peter, that is a rock, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*—St. Matt. xvi. 18.)

The necessity of a supremacy in the christian institute is so manifest, and so manifest also the advantages which the catholic church derives from its acknowledgment, that a great host of our protestant adversaries have had the candor to acknowledge them; (F)—have had the candor to confess that just as authority is the security of states, and the bond of their tranquillity,—the supremacy which we admit, is the guardian of our religion, and the cement of its unity; or, they add, just as liberty degenerates into licentiousness without the restraints of civil power, so reason, where there is no supremacy, will wander into error, and religion be devoid of energy. They have even done more, than acknowledge this: for remarking the impieties, the confusion and anarchy, which have disgraced the protestant societies, and which still disgrace them, some—and they were the most learned defenders of the protestant cause—some have attempted, by all the arts of eloquence and persuasion, to bring back their fellow members to the centre, from which

they had wandered. In this nation in particular, where some moderation marked the adoption of its new principles, though great immoderation marked the intolerance with which it enforced them, the necessity and wisdom of a spiritual supremacy, or of a centre of unity, is admitted, and forms even the basis or the key stone of its ecclesiastical establishment. It is not, my brethren, that I mean here to pay a compliment that is very flattering to the wisdom of my protestant countrymen: for though it be true that the admission of the above principle be wise, yet is their mode of applying it preposterous. Approaching in their *theory* nearer to the maxims of catholicity than any other sect of the reformation, in the *use* of the above theory, they depart equally remotely from them. (G) They apply it were neither reason nor religion had ever applied it before—confounding the rights of the throne with those of the altar—the privileges of the prince with the sacred character of the pontiff: they apply it to the former, and confer upon him the same supreme authority in the church, which he possesses in the state! I will only remark, that the circumstance, in every point of view, is censurable—censurable, because it has neither wisdom nor precedent for its apology, and censurable particularly in protestantism, because it is a system of the widest liberty, acknowledging no arbiter of faith,

but reason, and spurning all control, as the invention of popish tyranny.

But having convinced your good sense, that there exists in the catholic church a principle of unity, or a power, by which the unity of faith and the union of the faithful may be cherished and maintained, it is proper that I should now proceed to shew you, that this unity of faith and union of the faithful, do in reality subsist in our holy establishment, constituting one of the prominent characteristics of its divinity.

The unity of faith and the union of the faithful, which constitute the mark or characteristic of the true church, consist essentially in the constant belief and profession of the same tenets of revelation; because the tenets of revelation being divine, are consequently unchangeable in the participation of all in the same sacraments; because these also being divine, are destined also to be the perennial streams of grace, and the perpetual consolations of the faithful—in submission to the same form of government and dependence upon the same visible head; because these too, as I have already remarked, being the institutions of Jesus Christ, are likewise the principles of subordination and unanimity.

Taking, therefore, a view of these threefold circumstances, let us endeavour to discover how plainly they may be traced in the features of the catholic religion. My brethren, to trace the features of

unity in the religion and conduct of the catholic church, is one of the plainest of obvious things.—A mere glance at our professions of faith, at our writings, or at our conduct, will suffice to shew it. But just to take a general and superficial view, you see the immense body, which constitutes the members of the catholic church, in every nation, in every part and corner of the universe, united in the belief and profession of the same articles of revelation. There is not a shade, as it may be ascertained by referring to our creeds, catechisms, or professions—there is not a shade of difference among us. What you and I, my brethren, believe and profess in this sacred temple, the catholic American believes and professes amid the snows of Canada, and the catholic Egyptian upon the burning borders of the Nile. The catholic believes in China what the catholic believes in Italy—in Persia what he believes in Spain—in Turkey what he believes in Portugal—in Paraguay what he believes in England. In short, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, and in every part and portion of these great divisions of the universe,—in every city, town, or village, where catholicity subsists, it subsists every where alike: separated by seas, rivers, continents, and mountains, all believe what the church of Rome believes, all anathematize what the church of Rome rejects. Following in these respects the

advice of St. Paul to the Corinthians, *all speak the same thing; there are no divisions among them; they are perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.* (1 Cor. i. 10.) Here—and it is a circumstance which ought to astonish reason—here not the varieties of character, not the difference of education, not the clouds of prejudice, not the opposition of interests, create the most trifling disunion. Disunited in every other respect, they are here united and alike, and united and alike, not in the profession of a few articles, which the protestants pretend to call *fundamental*, and by which also they vainly pretend to link themselves together, but by the unanimous profession of every article of revelation, which the church proposes to their belief. In short, in the belief and profession of their tenets, the members of the catholic universe are just like rays united in one focus; *one* in the strictest sense of the characteristic. (H) *We are each of us, as Tertullian says, what all are, and all what each.*

But I have also remarked, that the characteristic of unity, besides unity in belief, demands also union among the faithful in the participation of the same sacraments, and in submission to the same form of government. It is indeed (so conspicuous are the evidences of this union) almost useless to attempt to prove it. As for the sacraments, their number,

matter, form, are every where the same. Their number every where is seven; and what you and I conceive essential to each of the seven, is in every nation conceived essential likewise. And hence, of course, as the catholic reveres them in every place, as the great streams of grace, their participation forms in every place, which the ray of faith illumines, the great link of charity among the faithful, the best source of their best consolation, and the incessant object of their veneration. Above all, my brethren, the mystery that has called you to day round this holy altar,—the divine, but insulted mystery of the Eucharist, is throughout the christian world the chief object of their adoration. Animated with the same faith which we here profess, above half the christian universe will, on this day, like us, bend down the knee to acknowledge its divinity. As it forms the greatest object of catholic piety, it forms also a very distinguishing feature in our unity. It is the sun that illumines, and the centre that joins us in one.

Similar to the unity of the catholic faith, and to the union of the faithful in the veneration of the same sacraments, are the respect and submission which they pay to the same form of government. The catholic, in every corner of the globe, acknowledges one head, the vicar of Jesus Christ, and the successor of St. Peter, invested not only with a

supremacy of honour, but a supremacy of jurisdiction over the whole body of the church. Heir of that authority which our great legislator conferred upon St. Peter, our supreme pontiff the Pope forms among us a *point of unity*, in which all the orders of the church, like so many rays, concentrate, and from which its various ranks and offices derive their jurisdiction—a *source of instruction*, deciding, in cases of dispute, the appeals which are made to his tribunal;—a *head of the apostolic college*, and a *common father of the faithful*, feeding, as Christ commanded Peter, both the *sheep* and the *lambs*, that constitute the fold. The advantages (I have already observed it) which result from this sacred institution, in maintaining unity of belief and union among the members of the church, are honestly conceded, even by the prejudices of our adversaries. A supremacy is evidently the principle of subordination; and subordination, it is equally evident, is the source of unity; awing the spirit of independence to submission, and the love of innovation to silence. Well; such is precisely the nature of the supremacy which every catholic admits and venerates. So that guided by it, where the nature of the occasion invokes its interference, or even, if you will, on all occasions, the catholic church forms *one body*, animated by *one soul*, moving by *one principle*, and acting by the simple mechanism of *one*

single power. "God," says St. Cyprian, "is one, Christ one, the church one, and that *see one*, which was founded upon Peter by the word of our Redeemer." (Ep. ad univ. plebem.)

Neither, my brethren, is the unity of the catholic church, which I have just described, peculiar to it at the present period. Its unity, in all those points which form the characteristic of unity, has been, in every preceding age, alike—alike in faith, in the participation of the same rites, and in the veneration of the same authority. What the catholic believes at present, each age, since the dawn of revelation, has believed before, and believed precisely as he does.

The investigation of this circumstance is one of those to which we ardently invite our adversaries. While it would prove a source of triumph to us, it might also be a principle of salvation to them; because, as their reason cannot but respect the doctrines of remote antiquity—beholding our doctrines correspond, or rather the same with those, which the saints have, since the dawn of christianity, believed—they would perhaps be induced to adore what they now deride, and to embrace what now they think it piety to reject. Effects, like these, it is true, must be the results of investigation conducted by the love of truth, animated by pious industry, and accompanied by prayer, humility, and virtue. And investigations, alas! of this nature,

formed upon such principles, are not, I am aware, in these times, to be expected. Let then curiosity itself—an honest impartial curiosity, give itself the trouble to discuss the important question. This I am convinced of, that without very arduous labour, without wasting many nights over the midnight lamp, it may soon ascertain the correctness of my assertion. I will just point out the plan on which curiosity should proceed to do it. Calling to its tribunal, not the whole creed of catholicity at once, but *one*, any one distinct tenet, which we profess, let it begin by consulting the fathers, historians, and monuments of the ages that are most immediately joined to the age of the apostles, what was the opinion which was then entertained respecting it, and placing this opinion by the side of ours, let it decide how nearly they agree. Continuing the same kind of process through the ages which succeeded the above, let it again, by the aid of writers, creeds, councils, and other attestations, which mark the public faith, again ascertain what was the belief upon the article in discussion—and again comparing this belief with what we believe at present, let it determine whether or not they disagree. Proceeding thus through each revolving century, examining each link which unites generation to generation, let it advance till it arrive at the present period. The consequence will be, let who may be the individual, whom candid cu-

riosity has thus prompted to make the investigation, he will find that the catholic tenet of the nineteenth century, is the tenet of every revolving era. He will find himself at the end of a well formed, and strongly rivetted chain, reaching from the age, or from the hand, of Jesus to the age in which he lives. He will discover, that what the Basils, the Chrysostoms, and the Austins,—what the learned, the wise, the great and good of every place and period have believed before, is what you and I believe at present. Such would be the effect of the discussion of any separate article of our faith; and prejudice itself, if prejudice had the patience to discuss such objects, would be reduced to own it. But, how much more triumphant would it be to us, and how much more useful to the individual, if, having once commenced this mode of examination, he could be induced to pursue it through the series of our tenets. He would see each generation believing the same maxims, adoring the same mysteries, submitting to the same authority, which *we* now revere. He would indeed see impiety and error often scattering abroad the seeds of heresy and seduction—he would observe “the prince of darkness” often attempting, with all the powers of malice, to break down the sacred barriers of piety—he would see anarchy and confusion, and wars and persecutions, while injuring the faithful, conspiring to injure the faith. But, he

would see too, that conformably with the assurance of Christ, *not even the gates of hell should prevail against the church*---he would see that the same holy maxims continued always to regulate its members, the same mysteries to console them, the same power to govern them. Impiety planted error and heresy, but to see them anathematised; and satan excited persecutions, but to present the occasion of new victories. In short, it had been promised, that the religion of Jesus should remain unchanged: and whoever will study well the religion of the catholic, will discover, that this promise has been accurately verified in its regard. He will remark it, like a great majestic river flowing through the midst of ages, always unadulterated and clear, casting out, if aught impure were thrown into it, the unclean and heterogeneous element---and overturning, if any obstacle interposed to impede its progress, the bold obtrusive barrier; clearest always, when malice has attempted to disturb its waters, and grandest always, when the *winds*, and *the rains*, and *the storms*, have combined to lift them up.

But, my brethren, these circumstances are so obvious when they are examined, that (I have twice remarked it) even prejudice must admit them. And, indeed, I could produce a long list of attestations from some of the most violent, though the most learned, of our antagonists, who have had the candor to acknowledge them. The Centuriators, intending

probably to insult us, although such insults are the highest compliments, in reality, which their kindness could bestow—the Centuriators call our religion, “a compound of all the errors of the ancient fathers.” Bishop Dudith acknowledges the same. So, indeed, does Luther, and the host of his deluded followers. What, says the bold patriarch, are a thousand Chrysostoms or a thousand Austins to me? Induced by the evidence of the similitude or identity of our present tenets, with those which the ancient fathers were wont to venerate, the first reformers have vilified and insulted the writings and authority of the latter, with the same copious scurrility, which they teemed upon the contemporaries who opposed them. Dr. Priestly, very justly remarks, and honestly allows, that “*so long, as any regard was paid to the fathers, and arguments were allowed to be fetched from them, the advantage, could not but lie on the side of popery.*” “Nor did the reformers, he adds, get clear of this difficulty and embarrassment, (for some in this country piously conceiving the necessity that the modern should resemble the ancient church, had the impudence to appeal to its old defenders)—till Chillingworth boldly declared that the bible only contained the religion of protestants.” Thus does the protestant abandon to us the authority of the fathers,—the good and wise of the best and wisest ages, honestly acknowledging, that our belief and maxims are the same which they professed. Now

let me just ask you here, my brethren, what in this conduct of the protestants is the most astonishing---the boldness of accusing us of error, who believe what they allow the most venerable pastors of the church have believed before us,---or the infatuation of conceiving that their own doctrines are divine, which they admit are different from the doctrines of preceding centuries? Why even our errors would be honorable, where we err only with the greatest men, whom, since the era of the apostles, christianity respects. But ah! how great is the credulity, how deep rooted the prejudice, that honestly---if honest credulity be possible in such circumstances, that honestly believe it!

If, after thus contemplating the unity of the catholic church, you consider the other principles, which besides that of a supreme authority, concur to link us closely together, you will be convinced that innovation, or a difference of belief, is morally impossible among us. We profess---and the church in each age has always professed the same,---that truth is one and divine, and consequently unchangeable---that our religion came forth from the bosom of the divinity, a complete and perfect system, and that therefore to attempt to change it, to add, or to take aught from it---to endeavour even to improve it, would be criminal. Hence, in the whole plenitude of her power, the church never pretends to create any new article of faith. Qn the contra-

ry, as if anxious to restrict her own power, and to render such creation impossible, she not only ties herself to believe the sacred scriptures, she ties herself to believe and interpret them in the same sense, in which every general council, and the pastors of each preceding century, have believed and interpreted them before. She solemnly declares, that she rejects any article or opinion which is not consonant to the dictates of this general and uninterrupted tradition. It is evident, that change or innovation is repugnant to the nature of such a constitution. (I)

The voice of the church, it is true, is the rule which directs the opinion of the faithful, because Christ Jesus has said, *he that hears you hears me*. Her authority is the power that awes them to submission, because he has also said, *he that will not hear the church, let him be to thee a heathen or a publican*. She is consequently the guardian of the sacred depositum of faith, and the arbiter, which, in cases of doubt, difficulty, or disorder, it is the general duty to obey. But here again, she acknowledges that all the plentitude of her authority is merely to watch over the holy depositum, and to see that it be transmitted unadulterate and unaltered to the end of time. She says nothing, on these occasions, that is new; she pretends not to any recent revelation, or fresh discovery—she only, under the influence of that spirit which has assured

us, that *he would remain with her, all days, to the end of the world*, declares what is the revelation that was once delivered to the apostles, and instructs the faithful, in what manner they should revere it. She acts, on these occasions, as the apostles did, when contests arose among their followers, respecting the ceremonies of the law. They assembled, deliberated, and declared what was the law of revelation. *It has seemed good, they said, to the Holy Ghost and to us.* Without any new revelation, she points out as they did, what the dictates of faith and piety require; thus staying the growth of error, and preventing, by the influences of her authority, the mischiefs of disobedience or disunity. For the faithful, it again is evident, under the impressions that her authority is divine, and her injunctions the voice of heaven, receive her mandates with respect, and obey them without resistance. Resistance, with such principles, would be a contempt of the divine authority, and disobedience would be rebellion. (K)

Thus, my brethren, upon a theatre, where objects are in a state of constant revolution—on a scene, where storms and tempests rage incessantly, and carry away in their anger the strongest monuments of human industry—where passions and vices and prejudices prevail, and imperiously control their victims—where opinions are daily changing, and institutions varying, almost like female

fashions—how striking, how astonishing is the circumstance, but how dear and consoling to our hearts, to behold, that amid all these prospects of confusion and perversity, our holy religion, and our holy religion only, has subsisted always without change or variation—always, and every where, beautiful and strong, and beautiful and strong, because always and every where united? With how great reason might I here exclaim in raptures of astonishment, as Balaam did, when from the top of the mountain he viewed the tents of Israel beneath him in the desert: *How beautiful, O Jacob, are thy tabernacles, and thy tents, O Israel!* In effect, in the unity of faith, and the union of charity, which tie the members of the church together, and which link generation to generation, we see verified that similitude to which I have before alluded, from St. John, that the church on earth should resemble its prototype in heaven. We see verified, that promise, which also I have cited in this discourse, that the unity in the church should resemble that unity which subsists between Christ and his eternal Father. *The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they should be one, even as we are one.* (St. John xvii. 22.)

Behold then, my brethren, I have placed before you the scene of unity, which the catholic church exhibits. I have convinced your reason, that in faith and in practice we are all *one*; and from our

principles, for ever formed to remain *one*. Of course, it should now be my object to hold forth to your observation the prospects and views of protestantism; and comparing its belief, its conduct and its maxims, with the nature of faith, and the nature of that unity which truth demands, proceed to shew you how exactly they accord. However, notwithstanding that I have compressed the various parts of this instruction as much as their moderate elucidation would permit, yet feeling that I have already exceeded the usual measure of a discourse, I will reserve these prospects and comparisons to the evening.—I will only, before I conclude, in few words, remind you, that you owe to God a two-fold tribute for his mercies—a general tribute of praise and adoration, for having, amid all the storms of passion, preserved his church—and a personal tribute of gratitude and love, for having, amid all the dangers of error, preserved *you* from its contagion, and retained *you* in the path that conducts to heaven. My brethren, after the happiness of possessing heaven, the greatest blessing is certainly to be placed in the path that conducts to it. After the happiness of rejoicing with the saints, the next is that of professing the same tenets, and practising the same means by which they became saints. Consider, therefore, your religion as your best inheritance. Tremble at whatever may endanger its loss. Let its tenets be the guides of your belief

—and what, in reality, is equally, or still more important—let its moral injunctions be the rules of your conduct. You are the members of the church, because you profess its doctrines—but you are useless members unless you cultivate its maxims. It is by uniting the belief of its doctrines with the observance of its maxims, that you are really catholics, or really virtuous christians. It is thus only you can rationally expect to insure the benefits of your holy religion: thus only, with propriety, hope to obtain the approbation of *Him*, who has made you the members of his church on earth, in order that one day he may make you the members of his church in heaven.



SERMON II.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE WANT OF UNITY IN THE PROTESTANT CHURCH.

We have seen and bear witness, that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.—1 St. John, iv. 14.

AFTER the trifling interval which has elapsed since my discourse this morning, it cannot seem necessary, either that I should recal to your recollection the principles which I then laid down as the basis of our present investigation, or recapitulate the conclusions which evidently resulted from them. Both the principles and the conclusions are, I flatter myself, still fresh in your remembrance. Suffice it just to say, that unity is one of the acknowledged marks of the church of Christ,—and you traced that unity distinctly in the church of catholics; you beheld its members, however widely they were separated by seas and regions,—however disunited by interests, inclinations, or preju-

dices,---however remote from each other by ages and generations---you beheld them in religion, intimately united, constituting one great people, professing the same faith, adoring the same mysteries, and submitting to the same authority. Bear, my brethren, the image of this scene deeply impressed upon your memories, because it is one of the sides of the comparison which your reason is about to make; and that comparison, you know it, if made with candor, is destined to present the evidence of truth, and the foundation of conviction.

Before I proceed to place before you the other side of the comparison, or before I etch the scenes which the reformation holds out to your contemplation, it will perhaps be proper to premise this observation---that if aught upon the canvas appear distorted---if instead of the lovely images of harmony, I present the prospects of discord and confusion, the fault is neither in the pencil, nor in the hand that holds it. I should deem criminal the line that marked unfaithfully even the features of distortion; and illiberal the shade that contributed to give darkness to a shade unhappily too dark already. Truth always should hold, and charity direct the pencil which delineates any object of religion. I flatter myself that truth and charity will regulate mine. If, therefore, in the etching which I exhibit, any thing appear distorted and too darkly shaded, the distortion and shade are in the nature

of the objects which I describe. The representation of any object is only faithful by giving it the features, the attitudes, the shades, and colours, which it possesses. A faithful portrait is a faithful mirror, reflecting back the objects as they are; if disfigured, of course disfigured,—if dark, dark. It is true, if even I were, in delineating the portrait of protestantism, to add a few awkward lines to some of its distorted features, or to give more darkness to its shades, I could find an apology for the disgraceful conduct, in the conduct of our adversaries. I should only do what they do every day. For, my brethren, it is true, that when the protestant pretends to give the portrait of what he nicknames popery, he presents a daub, the suggestions of malevolence, or the creature of his ignorance, in which there is neither line, nor look, nor attitude, nor colour true;—a mere caricature held forth to excite contempt, to awaken ridicule, or to provoke injustice. Such is the case with nearly the whole herd of our protestant countrymen, from the mitred prelate, (A) down to the meanest parson; and from the most learned historian to the superficial author of a novel. (B) The circumstance is singular in a nation whose peculiar boast is liberality; and whose most striking characteristics are certainly mildness and good sense. It is not the place, nor indeed the time, to explain the causes of this seeming phenomenon. The causes are various;

but a leading cause is the applause with which this species of illiberality has always been greeted by the vulgar, and the rewards (I blush to say it) which hitherto it has met with from the great. However, peace to the men who thus insult us, and to the men too who deem it piety to reward them. May the rays of charity beam upon them; and may that spirit which guides them, have no influence upon me. As for me, my brethren, this I am sure of—I can put my hand upon my heart, and appeal to heaven that it is true—it is not the impulse of rancour—it is not the suggestion of displeasure against our adversaries, that have urged me to delineate a portrait which may displease them. It is, if I know myself, a motive diametrically the reverse. I shall do it under the influences of charity, acting under the influence of truth—I shall do it from a principle of benevolence, animated by the sincerity of a conviction which has study, industry, and reason for its basis. At all events, lest any should be disposed to suspect the facts or actions which I shall bring forward, either in this, or any subsequent discourse, I will just add, that mere reflections apart—the whole, or nearly the whole, shall be borrowed from the writings, the public acts, and attestations of the protestants themselves.

Having premised these observations, I proceed to the discussion of the claims, which protestantism presents to the mark of unity. The necessity of

the mark, I have already observed, is equally admitted by the protestant and the catholic; and the wisest of the former, like the whole body of the latter, explain the important attribute in the manner which I suggested this morning to you—that for the church, or for any church, to be *one* in the sense of the Nicean creed, it is necessary that its members be united in the same belief, and that this belief be also the same which ages have professed before.

Casting then a general look upon the great herd of mankind, and marking the general distinctions under which they are classed—or if you will, placing before me the map of the universe, and observing the various kingdoms that divide it, and the religious denominations which the various kingdoms have adopted, I find that an immense portion of society is distinguished by the appellation of *protestants*—I find that several of the great kingdoms, provinces, and cities are characterised by this term. However, as I know that a general term is, by no means, in all cases, the proof of any unity of principle—just as the term *christian* is not indicative of any particular institute—I of course proceed to analyze its signification, and to examine whether the denomination of *protestants* be indeed applied to the professors of *one* religion only. The discussion of this circumstance is not an object that demands either industry or study.

I at once discover that it is intended merely to be a term of division, a name of separation,—I had almost said, the watch-word of rebellion, employed by the discontented, when they rejected the authority of the parent church. So far from denoting any unity of faith, I find that it comprises an absolutely countless multitude of sects, societies, conventicles, and heresies, condemning each other, vilifying each other, anathematizing and combating each other,—a chaos of confusion, or “a jumbled herd of jarring dogmatists,” disagreeing in every thing but their abhorrence of the religion which they have abandoned. It would far exceed the limits of a discourse, even superficially, to enumerate them. Indeed I believe that not even all the industry of learning or curiosity could do it. About thirty years ago, the royal society of this country made an attempt of this description. They endeavoured to ascertain what was then the number of the organised sects within the boundaries of England; and though the research was made without much interest or attention, they traced distinctly upwards of sixty—a great number certainly, when we reflect that the true religion is essentially *one*—a small number, when we consider that the protestant rule of faith is only private judgment. It is the same in every other protestant establishment—in Germany, Holland, Switzerland, in all the states, provinces, and cities, where pro-

testantism has superceded catholicity. Each state is a distinct establishment, (C) self-created and independent, exhibiting in itself a portrait not unlike that fabled being, which poetry has depicted terrific with fifty heads; or perhaps rather like that other fabled creature, which it has described assuming every form and colour. My brethren, this is certain, there is nothing, *in the general view* of protestantism, that presents a scene of unity. (D)

Quitting, therefore, this medium, as too vague to ascertain the claims which it possesses to this essential mark of truth, I interrogate what my reason tells me should be the best criterion of its existence. I interrogate the creeds of protestantism—not collectively, that is impossible; nor indeed all of them separately—that is almost equally impossible; but the creeds of those states and churches, which from their antiquity, such as it is, their respectability and extent, have the strongest titles to attention. You know, my brethren, I have often urged this consideration upon your reason,—you know, that truth being *one*, is consequently unchangeable—you know, that religion being divine, is consequently a complete and perfect system. Of course, you know, that the faith which has varied, the system which has frequently been altered, in order to be amended, cannot possibly be divine. “*Nothing*, says the learned protestant (Dr. Hey) *nothing occurs to me, which is so essential to a chris-*

tian church as to admit of no variation." (Vol. 2d.) Variation undoubtedly implies the supposition—or is rather the concession of errors, faults and defects; and therefore if variations have really taken place in the creeds of protestantism, they evidently prove that such creeds were merely human, the creatures of caprice, and the dictates of the fancy.

Investigating, then, the important question by the light of these maxims, I have alternately studied the history of the formation of the creeds of some of the leading sects of protestantism, the Lutheran, the Calvinistic, the creed of our own establishment, &c. And suffice it to say of them all—for the history of all is very nearly the history of each—they all present a scene and series of changes and variations, which are quite inconsistent with the nature of faith, and the perfection of religion. (E) I see new articles of belief proposed and adopted with the strongest apparent conviction, that they were true; and in the interval of a few years, I see them altered and rejected with the fullest conviction, that they were false. I see incessant reforms of reformation, and re-reforms of what had often been re-reformed before. In some cases, I see the same hand destroy at night, what with pious industry it had created in the morning; for as Bossuet observes, it frequently happened that each day had its creed. In short, in the formation of their creeds, the pro-

testants, it is certain, have manifested little which piety or good sense can deem either human wisdom, human stability, or human decorum. They were for ever retouching and changing, retrenching or adding, improving or deteriorating—for ever, as St. Paul describes it, *fluctuating with every wind of doctrine*, constant in nothing but inconstancy, steady in nothing but variation. The waves that wash our shores are less unsteady. The case is, the history of protestant creeds is the history of almost all the passions of the human heart. Often they were the dictate of party violence—often of individual interest—often of bigotry and fanaticism—often of ignorance and credulity, whilst they owe their adoption to the general weakness of the public. Hence they have changed with the change of times, and varied with every variation of circumstance. There is not, amid the numberless institutions of protestantism, *one* which retains exactly the principles of its founders; or rather there is not one which has not deviated very widely from them. (F) The circumstance is acknowledged by a multitude of protestant writers, with a candor that reflects more credit upon their sincerity than it casts upon their consistency. They honestly own, that the first reformers, owing to the storms and confusion of the times (certainly it is wise to make some apology for them, and we willingly admit it) they own that the first reformers were “clumsy

and unskilful architects," who possessing the talents, and omnipotent in the means of pulling down the fabric of the ancient church, had neither the art to build, nor the taste to decorate the new one. "They were left," says the late learned and venerable Bishop of Worcester (Dr. Hurd) "to the natural influence of their passions, and they acted as their passions impelled them." (Introd. to the proph.)

After remarking the want of unity and stability, which has been common to the creeds of protestantism, it were in vain to expect either, in the faith of its professors. Among its professors—be the society among its multifarious societies to which they belong what it may—there are almost as many doctrines as teachers, as many opinions as individuals, as many sects as sectaries. Unity, except in one solitary circumstance, I have before remarked it, there is none. What is truth, evidence, and demonstration to one, is error, falsehood, and folly to another. It is so, indeed principally so, among the learned. Men of the same establishment are men of different religions. I doubt much whether it would be possible to find two that believe precisely alike. I doubt whether among the thinking class of protestants, it would be possible to find one, who through life, has retained the same opinions—one, who in the series of a long and studious life, has not repeatedly changed them. In the recent publications of the protestant clergy

of this nation, although these should be measured by the rule of the articles which they have subscribed,—there is nothing like unity of principle or unity of faith to be discovered. Adopting as the basis of their reasoning—some of them the principles of Calvin—some of them the maxims of Arminius—some of them the still wider maxims of Socinus—and some of them their own,—at least applying some of the above principles by the dictate of their own ideas, they give to the divine and unchangeable system of religion every form and feature which fancy can suggest, or which reason emancipated from the restraints of authority can dictate. If curiosity would discuss their writings, in cases where they have undertaken to explain the meaning of their own articles, it will be found that few or none of them agree in the same interpretations. It will be found, that in one article or other, each has his favourite system, the creature of his own wisdom, or the offspring of his own caprice. But, if too, placing the writings of our modern protestants by the side of the writings of their predecessors at certain periods, curiosity would give itself the trouble to compare them, it would discover, that they are nearly as unlike each other, as they are unlike the writings of the catholic. Indeed he would find that at one period, the reign of the second Charles, the writings of some protestant prelates, upon some

controverted points, are more unlike the writings of a modern protestant, than they are unlike those of a catholic. There is hardly one article in which I could not refute the opinion of a modern protestant by the opinion of an ancient one. In short, comparing the present state of protestantism with its supposed youth, and the days of its greatest vigour, it will be found to retain few vestiges of the former, and perhaps still fewer features of the latter.

But the cause of all this is obvious. The differences which we have traced in the creeds of our protestant brethren, in the faith of individuals, or in the writings of their divines, all these are the natural and the necessary result of the principles and constitution of protestantism. Disunity is as essentially interwoven in its principles and constitution, as unity is interwoven with those of catholicity.

Protestantism reposes entirely upon the ruins of authority, and the rejection of an infallible tribunal. When the apostles of protestantism entered upon the bold career of reforming, as the first measure which they adopted was to detach themselves from the centre of unity, and to spurn the influences which maintained it, their first doctrine was, consequently, and indeed very consistently, this—that faith is the dictate of private judgment, and that freedom from control is the attribute of christian liberty. The creed, which was proposed

by the wisdom of the church, they called an imposition upon public credulity; and the power that was exercised by its tribunal, they termed usurpation, tyranny, and injustice. According, therefore, to the principles and constitution of protestantism, every individual, no matter whether he be learned or ignorant, the wisest pastor or the most stupid laymen, is essentially the judge of his own religion, and the interpreter of the sacred scriptures. The religion of a protestant, says one of the wisest on the bench of our present protestant prelates (Dr. Watson)---not, it is true, citing the authority of an apostle, but using the words of a pagan writer---“*the religion of a protestant is to believe just what he pleases, and to profess what he believes.*” There is no exaggeration, no inaccuracy in this definition. Having appreciated the nature of the protestant rule of faith, the respectable prelate has, with the consistency of a protestant, and the elegance of a scholar, defined it, perhaps in the most accurate terms, which either his theology or his learning could have furnished. The supreme tribunal of the belief of every consistent protestant, is his own reason. (G) Every other tribunal is subordinate to this. Pastors and prelates are mere counsellors and advisers; consistories and synods mere offices of police; and creeds and confessions mere instructions addressed to the ignorant or simple. If any of these were to attempt to con-

trol belief—if any were to endeavour to chain down the understanding to any determinate code of faith, they would, by the real and original principles of protestantism, be the inconsistencies, the violation, and the tyranny of protestantism. The re-introduction of authority, or the re-admission of any tribunal, save that of human reason, would be (the good sense of many protestants has allowed it) the re-introduction of catholicity, and the re-admission of its power. (H)

Thus although religion, in its proper and original meaning, signify *a tie*, and were even considered such by the reason of the pagan; although truth be essentially *one*, and the wisdom which communicated it to mankind have ordained, that it should be preserved unadulterated and entire—although too such be the weakness of the human mind, and the instability of the heart, that, in almost every circumstance, the former requires the aid of counsel, and the latter the restraints of authority, yet by the constitution of protestantism, neither religion is a tie upon the reason of its professors—truth has no adequate tribunal to watch over its integrity, nor has the mind any oracle either to guide its ignorance, or to restrain its evagations. Why; to conceive that the unity of truth, or the union of subordination, could possibly subsist under so wide a system of mental emancipation, to my apprehension appears impossible. It

were conceiving what is not in the nature of the human character, though even it were much more enlightened than it is. But formed as we are, weak, ignorant, and vain—the dupes of the imagination, and the sport of prejudice cradled to errors, and trained to all the various forms of habits, passions, and inclinations, there is nothing so natural in the conduct of men, where men are left to themselves, as dissonance of belief, and difference of opinion. Nothing short, either of an infallible tribunal, or a miraculous interposition of the divine wisdom can, in such situation, produce unity of faith. And hence do the principles of protestantism, while they give birth to every fiction and form of error, give also a sanction and confirmation to them—while they are the parent of every heresy, which religion and piety deplore, they afford also to every heresy the same arguments for its defence, and the same authority for its introduction. Yes, my brethren, and it is to these principles, unhappily too consonant to the pride of the human heart, and too analogous to its corruption, that we must attribute not only the disunity which prevails among the countless sects of the reformation, but the general spirit of incredulity which pervades society. Extending through all the ramifications of error, the Socinian considers them as the basis of his modifications of christianity, the Pyrrhonist as the motives of his scepticism, the de-

ist as the evidences of his infidelity, and even the atheist as the proofs of his impiety. (I). Observe, I speak of the leading maxims of protestantism only, and of the errors, to which of their own nature, and when applied in their full extent they generally conduct. Fortunately for the cause of protestantism, for the cause of religion and of society, men do not generally apply them in their full extent through all their dreadful consequences and bearings. Staid by the instincts of piety and decorum, they apply them only to a certain number of objects; and though they wander in the mazes of error, their happy timidity keeps them aloof from the precipice, to which, their principles, if pursued, inevitably would conduct them.

The reformers were soon sensible of the pernicious tendency of these maxims, and of the evils which they were calculated to produce. It was the long chain of these evils, that the weak, though penetrating, Melancthon contemplated, when he so emphatically exclaimed, "*Great God! what a tragedy are we reformers preparing for the universe.*" However, in order in some degree at least, to counteract these mischiefs, and to establish among their followers something like the unity of faith which they acknowledged was essential to the true religion, and whose absence in theirs they were aware the catholic would forcibly urge against it, their ingenuity suggested and adopted a variety of arti-

fices and expedients. They adopted, in the first place, as the medium of unity, the great record of our holy religion--the sacred scriptures. "It is not," they incessantly called out to their hearers, "it is not in the codes of faith which your credulity has hitherto revered, that your reason must look for the true religion. These invented often by superstition, and imposed by the interested policy of Roman pontiffs, are but the illusions of folly to amuse your weakness, or the artifices of error to enslave your understandings. The only code of your faith is the *bible*; and the only interpreter of the *bible* is *your own reason*. Read it. It alone is divine. In it alone you will trace the genuine tenets or revelation. A ray of the purest light beams upon each page, which immediately, without the aid of councils, which are fallible; of authority--which is tyranny--or of any other mediums, which are all fallacious--immediately points out the truth. And what, they added, is the use of reason, if it be not to direct you in this momentous research? what the use of your judgment and understanding, if here their dictates are set aside?" My brethren, you feel the force of this appeal to minds already warmed with the love of liberty, and gratified by the prospects of novelty. It was certainly calculated to please and to produce effects. They instantly adopted the bible as the sole code of faith; and their reason they constituted its

interpreter. They read it, as their apostles recommended, unawed by the controls of authority, and unaided by the influences of extraneous wisdom. Well, and what was the consequence? Why, such as your reason and mine would naturally suppose. As they read it through different mediums, they beheld its truths in different forms. As they read it with different passions, prejudices, and interests, they interpreted its pure and unchangeable doctrines into tenets the most preposterous, contradictory, and multifarious—multifarious almost as the individuals who interpreted them. Thus, for example,---just to instance only one or two of the great and most important objects of revelation—within the space of very few years from the introduction of the reformation, above eighty systematic and warmly defended interpretations were given of the few words “*this is my Body.*” While one great host of these interpreters, who leaned to the side of Luther, proved evidently from them that Christ is really present in the holy Eucharist—the other, who inclined to the sect of Calvin, as evidently proved, in their conceptions, that he is really absent. While a considerable part of the reformers demonstrated the divinity of our great redeemer, another, though less numerous portion, affected clearly to evince, that his divinity is a fable. While multitudes proved the necessity of infant baptism, a great society of others proved its

impropriety. In short, my brethren, under the pleasing presumption, that the bible is the sole rule of faith, and the reason of each individual its sole interpreter, the reformers, who at first, were not the believers of any specific system of religion—they had these to form—but only separatists from the catholic church, soon divided, subdivided, and frittered themselves into sects, societies, and conventions too various for the industry of the historian to enumerate,—too absurd for curiosity itself to investigate with pleasure. Germany alone soon beheld above a hundred organized religions, where a few years before it had contemplated only one; and it beheld each religion, however impious or absurd its tenets, equally convinced of its own divinity, and equally ardent in its defence. The circumstance, my brethren, of the varieties of belief in protestantism, is only what I have before remarked; it is natural to expect, where men, with all the shades of the human character, are the interpreters of the holy scriptures. And, as for the other circumstance, of the conviction which each sect possesses of the divinity of its own tenets, and the ardor with which it stands forward in their defence, this also is equally natural with the former, of which indeed it is the obvious result. For, if the scriptures be the sole rule of faith, and the reason of the individual their sole interpreter, then not only does a Luther, a Calvin, or a Cranmer, with equal wis-

dom believe his own peculiar tenets, and defend them with equal justice, but as every other sectarist, or individual, possesses the same privileges as these apostles, the consequence is evident, that whoever armed with the scriptures, reads and interprets them, has just as much proof that his interpretations are wise, although they be but the dreams of fancy—as much reason to defend them, although they be but the dictates of passion, as if they were the interpretations of consistories, or the decrees of synods. Indeed he has even more; for by the most fundamental of all protestant maxims, all extraneous authority that controls belief is an infringement of christian liberty. “*The bible I say,*” exclaims Mr. Chillingworth, “*the bible only is the religion of protestants.*”

Hence, since the bible, interpreted as the protestant interprets it, does not produce that unity of faith, which is the acknowledged characteristic of the true religion, what consequence again can be more obvious than that, neither of its own nature *it is*, nor by the designs of our great legislator is *intended to be*, the sole principle of christian unity, or the sole rule of christian faith? The principle of universal unity, or the sole rule of christian faith, should, if we consult only the plain dictates of common sense, or still more the notions which we entertain of the wisdom and beneficence of that Being who shed the beams of faith upon the

world—should possess evidences so striking, characters so obvious and distinct, that not even ignorance itself could mistake or misunderstand them. The rule which is the sole guide to all, should certainly be obvious to all: designed for the ignorant as well as for the learned; for the vicious as well as for the virtuous, it should be equally clear and easy to the ignorant and the vicious, as it is to the learned and the virtuous. At least, I repeat it, being the rule *of all*, it should be obscure *to none*. Supposed also as it is, to be the perfect rule and the basis of belief, it ought necessarily, from the former circumstance, to contain every article which reason should revere; and from the latter, it should be so strong, that piety may rest upon it without either the inquietudes of danger, or the alarms of doubt. The absence of any one article of faith, or any incertitude respecting the stability of the basis upon which faith and the hope of salvation should repose, would certainly be great defects in an instrument so vitally important. To suppose such defects is an impeachment of the wisdom which dictated it; while also, to my apprehension, it appears a violation of human wisdom to consider or denominate such an instrument *a rule*. For, why consider and denominate that a rule which requires another rule to interpret it, another rule to complete it, another rule to give a rational conviction of its security? Hence, my brethren, after con-

sidering the nature of the sacred scriptures, which St. Peter himself calls “difficult and obscure,”—after considering the properties of the human character, whose varieties are infinite—after viewing the disunity of the reformed establishments, which agree in nothing but their aversion to catholicity, I can only say, that if indeed the sacred writings be, in the designs of God, as the protestant asserts, the rule of christian unity, they are, as they produce no unity, a very singular rule indeed—they are such as my reason would not suppose even the imbecility of the weakest human legislator would have established, who wished to retain any thing in his dominions like union of subordination, or unity of justice. Or, if indeed they be designed to preserve the unity of religion, I can only say, that I admire much more those human legislators, who, creating laws to preserve unity, subordination, and justice, create also tribunals to interpret, and authority to enforce them—I can only say, that if the same principles were applied to moral duties, or to civil obligations, not only would it be easy to find apologies for every vice, or motives to untie the bands of every government, it would be easy to demonstrate, that such conduct would be but the rational exercise of liberty, and, in a multiplicity of cases, the exertion of virtuous heroism. In short, I can only say, that if the bible be the sole rule of faith, and the reason of each individual its

sole interpreter—unity of faith, where men do become interpreters, is impossible, and because impossible, since they are allowed to become interpreters—immaterial.

Sensible of the force of these objections, and importuned by the frequent repetition of them by their catholic adversaries, a considerable number of the reformers acquiesced in their wisdom, and acknowledged the consequent absurdity of allowing to all the unrestricted and unconditional privilege of interpreting the sacred volumes. “Let all indeed, they said, read and interpret them. But then, let them do it cautiously, and let their judgments be formed with care and wise discretion. Let them consult the voice of God, which, on such occasions, will whisper truth to reason, and conviction to the heart. The nature of truth, they added, is such, that it is as easily distinguished *by the spirit which moves within us*, as the taste of food is distinguished by the palate. The spirit, when consulted, is to truth, which is the food of the soul, what the palate is to meat, which is the food of the body.”

Specious as this improvement may appear on the mode and privilege of interpreting the holy scriptures, yet it is specious only—a mere difference of terms to express the same thing. Or even if there be any difference between this system, which they denominate that of “*the private spirit*,” and that

which I have before described, I should not hesitate to say, that the former is the more dangerous and pernicious of the two. It appears indeed to put some restrictions upon liberty, and to stay the progress of its evagations; but then it gives to fanaticism what it takes away from liberty, and leaves to pride, passion, bigotry, and the imagination, all that infallibility of decision, which the protestant deems so groundless in our holy church. Its theoretical absurdities and practical mischiefs are innumerable. However, it does not enter into the plan of this discourse to point these out. Enough for my present purpose it is, to shew, that it did not establish that unity which its defenders had hoped it was calculated to produce. The nature of this system, I have said, is to leave each individual the privilege of explaining, indeed, the sacred scripture, but of regulating his explanations, and fixing his opinions of its doctrines, by the light, or as they express it, "*by the taste of the spirit.*" Well; men explained, judged, and decided by this "taste." And what was the consequence? Why, as the "tastes of the spirit" unfortunately varied, this system of unity became a principle of disunity. It gave birth to as many doctrines as there were differences in the fancy; and as it added conviction to each doctrine, by rendering it the supposed dictate of God communicated through the medium of the *spirit*, it added also

new enthusiasm to its defence. Such were the mischiefs and confusion which it produced, that the men, whose imprudence had first broached it, were the first who had the prudence to abandon it. It undid what it was meant to have done;—it proved far too much, and therefore nothing—it proved any thing that folly dreamt, or that bigotry suggested. The system is nearly, though not yet entirely, abandoned. It is still the basis of some enthusiasm—still the foundation upon which repose the ravings of the quaker, the cant of methodism, and the pitiful errors of a multitude of ignorant and deluded fanatics. But, these excepted, although some of the learned may lean the conviction of their own illusions upon its dictates, there are very few in the walks of science that now attempt to defend it, as rational or secure.

Still, notwithstanding the failure of this once warmly defended system of unity, as unity was yet allowed to be the appendage of the true church, the ingenuity of its authors was reduced to the necessity of seeking out some other medium for its support, or rather, some other expedient to call it back. The peace of society, and the security of their own interests rendered some expedient necessary; for the tide of licentiousness, unrestrained by any thing that could be called a barrier to passion, had already broken down the mounds, which the industry of wisdom had erected; and

inundating the walks and avenues of piety, of truth, of religion, and of civil and domestic harmony, it threatened in its fury to overwhelm and annihilate them. The storm was awful and terrific. The men, whose passions had bade it rise, were themselves affrightened as its horrors, and trembled for its consequences. They endeavoured to appease it. My brethren, it is here you have again another instance of the inconsistency of error. They endeavoured to appease the storm. And what new means did they adopt to do it? Having, hitherto, inculcated that the right of private judgment is the essential privilege of nature; having established the bible as the sole rule of faith, and reason as its sole interpreter; having exploded creeds as the artful intrusions of fallible and deluded men upon the credulity of the deluded public,—my brethren, what means could they adopt? Why, absurd, as it should appear, although not singular,—for absurdity is no singularity in heresy—they adopted the very methods which they had exploded; they re-established the very mediums which a little time before they had proclaimed it piety to destroy,—they called back the very objects which they had just branded with every odious appellation of impositions, and acts of tyranny. They re-introduced creeds and confessions! And behold the still greater contradiction; they compelled their followers to believe, that these creeds and confessions

were divine! They even did more; for, in most instances, they compelled them to *swear*, not only that they believed them to be divine, but to swear also, that they really were divine. (K) The disbelief of them was attended by excommunication, and the disbeliever solemnly declared to be accursed! My brethren, tell me what in this conduct is most to be admired—the awful mockery of the maxims of the reformation, the intrepid insolence of its leaders, or the tame submission of its insulted partisans? In every point of view, save that of human policy, it is an imposition and an absurdity. In human policy, I allow it, as it places some restraints upon the licentiousness of insubordination, and the progress of impiety, it is artful, prudent, and commendable—the wisdom of protestant policy, but the folly of protestant theology,—the best security of protestant governments, but the gross violation of protestant maxims. However, it is not here the place to dwell on expressions of admiration, nor do the limits of a desultory discourse admit many reflections on these inconsistencies. My object is merely again to prove, that not even these substitutions of policy in the room of principle were adequate to introduce, or sufficient to support, a real unity of belief. The case is, by a strange incongruity in the reformers, along with the restrictions of creeds, they still admit the principle of liberty of faith, the principle of private inter-

pretation of the bible, and the principle, that all human authority being fallible, is an unsafe criterion of belief. The consequence is, that although the stupidity of some may revere their creeds, and honestly believe them,—although the avidity of interest may piously swallow the oaths, which testify a conviction of their divinity, and candidly hope that such hunger is no crime—yet is it manifest from the writings, the conversation, and the conduct of protestants in general, not only that they are disunited in their faith, but that not even their creeds are ties upon the opinions of the men who have solemnly attested that they believe them. Consult, for example, the writings and conversation of our own countrymen, who without indeed swearing that they believe the 39 articles, religiously *subscribe* their acceptance and veneration of them. You find, from their writings, that although many undertake to explain and defend them, yet scarce any explain them in the same manner, or defend them with the same arms. And, as for their conversation, you find that while multitudes treat them with all the levity of disrespect, there are none but acknowledge that they greatly want improvement. It is so, Mosheim attests, in every protestant establishment. Men swear and subscribe to creeds; but their oaths and subscriptions are cobwebs, which the liberty of belief breaks asunder every day. In short, I believe this true,—

and I think it extremely natural—I think, that if you and I, my brethren, could read in the minds of each individual protestant throughout the universe, we should not find two, whose tenets, if formed upon the rule of protestantism, are perfectly similar. Where each one judges for himself, and believes “as he pleases,” how can they possibly be similar?

However, it is said—and this is the last subterfuge of protestant ingenuity—there exists, it is said triumphantly, between the reformed churches and between the members of the reformation, not only a tie of union, by which they mutually love each other, but a real unity of faith, by which they constitute one congregation of believers. *They all admit*—this is the band of unity—the same great, leading, and fundamental articles of the christian revelation. (L) I allow it, there is in the first blush of this profession, something plausible and striking—something that is calculated to impose, and that, in reality, does impose upon the understandings, not only of the superficial, but of men who are reputed learned and conscientious. It certainly is the best, or rather the least bad, of all those arguments, by which the protestant attempts to prove, that there is any thing like unity in protestant belief. However, my brethren, plausible as it may appear at first, yet this I am sure of, it will require but a momentary appeal to your good sense, to be convinced of its futility. The pro-

testant asserts, that the protestant societies are united in belief, because they believe the same fundamental articles. But whence do they derive the assurance, that there is aught in faith which is not fundamental? Whence the conviction, that there is aught in revelation which they are permitted to disbelieve with impunity, or to reject without offence? The scripture, which they affect to revere as the rule of their belief, nowhere asserts, or even insinuates, that aught which Jesus taught is not fundamental; on the contrary, the scripture, without qualifying the dreadful threatening, asserts, that "*whoever shall not believe shall be damned.*" You seek in vain, for any distinction between what is fundamental and what is not. There is not a text, not a syllable, that would seem to authorise such distinction. It is only solemnly said, in plain and explicit terms, that "*whoever does not believe shall be damned.*" In reality, Jesus revealed all, that he has revealed in order to be believed, in the same manner as he has commanded all, that he has commanded in order to be observed. And therefore if the disobedience of what he has ordered is criminal, why also is not the disbelief of what he has revealed? What presumption it is for human weakness boldly to determine what among the secrets of the divine wisdom is fundamental, and what is not. Ought not every thing to appear fundamental and ne-

cessary for man to believe, which God has deemed it fundamental and necessary for his salvation to reveal?

But did we admit that there are such objects as fundamental and unfundamental articles of belief, not even would this suffice to demonstrate, that there exists aught like unity among the various sects of protestantism. For the fact is, they do not agree among themselves respecting the number of their supposed fundamental articles. While some of their writers have decided that there are ten, others have determined that there are but six. While some have proved that there are only four, others more enlightened and more liberal have demonstrated that there are only two. Their disagreement respecting the nature of the fundamental articles, is similar to this discordance about their number. What is fundamental in one sect, is quite un consequential in another. The article which forms the discriminating feature in each sect, is always its most fundamental article; while this very article is that which, to the apprehensions of other sects, is not only of no moment, but the basis of its heterodoxy. Such, in short, is the variety and the dreadful latitude which the defenders of fundamental articles have given to this pernicious opinion, that while few or none accord in their notions of what precisely is fundamental in religion, some have reduced it to a system very

little removed from deism. Luther himself asserts, that to be saved, it suffices to believe that Christ is God, and that the Pope is Antichrist. Cappel, still more tender, allows, that even the Mahometans may be saved, not because they believe that Christ is God, but, good-natured Man! *'because they do not curse him!'* In reality, by the system of fundamental articles, any thing is fundamental or unfundamental, that the fancy or the folly, the reason or the weakness, the piety or the licentiousness of each individual may deem such. And, if it be a system of unity, I can only say, it is a system not of unity, of belief, but of unity of disbelief;—not a system which links its defenders in the bands of religion, but one which joins them together in the ties of incredulity and impiety.

Thus, my brethren, I have this day alternately exhibited to your view, upon a very narrow canvas, the etchings of the state of our holy religion, and the situation of the reformed societies. I have placed the two portraits by the side of each other, and compared them, I think, with candor. I certainly could have no motive to draw one feature, or to form one line inaccurately. In the catholic church, you contemplated the pleasing scene of one immense family animated with one mind, moving by one principle, and guided by one power. You beheld the picture of the “one fold,” under the direction of the “one shepherd.”

Within its sacred paling, you saw reign that order and tranquility, that security (L) and confidence, that sameness of heart and willingness of obedience, which distinguish the household of the elect, and make it resemble the peaceful abodes of Sion. Out of its precincts—on the canvas, which exhibited to you the views of protestantism, you beheld a scene of discord and division—the prospect of an immense multitude of men affecting to adore religion, under all the varied forms of fanaticism and fancy—of mistaken piety and illusive liberty—of interested cant and bold licentiousness. Unity or union there is none, save what under the control of power rests upon the violation of principle; or, under the influence of indifference, reposes under the convictions of prejudice and ignorance.—The consequence is, my brethren, that if indeed the principle be correct, which I laid down this morning as the criterion of the true religion, and which also I remarked, the protestant himself admits—“*that unity in faith is the essential mark and appendage of the church of Christ, destined to distinguish it from all heretical and human institutions*”—if this principle be correct, the consequence is, that since unity prevails in the catholic church alone, the catholic church alone is the church of Christ—since disunity every where reigns in the protestant church, the protestant church is merely a human fabric erected by the hands of passion.

It was in order to render these two consequences palpable to your reason, that I laid before you, in the next place, the causes from which they immediately result. I explained to you the principle by which the faith of the catholic is directed—shewed you, that it is the strongest tie with which the wisdom of God could coerce the pride of reason, or stay its evagations,—leaving nothing to its determination but calm acquiescence and unhesitating submission—for even the hesitation of submission, or any diffidence of assent, are criminal repugnances to the principle of catholic unity. I shewed you the maxim upon which the faith of the protestant is hinged. This is, “to believe just what he pleases”—just what his own reason may suggest, or his own judgment dictate. Now as reason and judgment vary in almost every individual, they must, of course, I shewed you, in almost every individual produce different results. Unity, certainly, is not the appendage of such maxim. And hence again, my brethren, the consequence is; since the system of unity requires a principle of unity—since the catholic church admits such principle, and the protestant church rejects it—the consequence is, that the former possesses a claim to unity, which the latter evidently wants.—And too another consequence is, resulting from the preceding, that while the faith of the catholic is the calm and rational confidence of conviction

leaning upon the rock of an authority, which he conceives infallible, the belief of the protestant, on the contrary, if he be consistent, is but the fancied dictate of his own reason—a bold speculation, a hazarded conjecture, a supposed probability at best.

Wherefore, my brethren, feeling and acting, as I exhorted you to do this morning, be grateful to God, whose mercy has placed you, without any deservings in yourselves, in the path that is marked by such beams of light; and let your gratitude, manifested by your conduct, be such, as in the eyes of your neighbours, may do credit to your religion. Be grateful, and rejoice in the circumstance, that you are advancing towards heaven in the path which certainly conducts to it—united in faith with the far largest portion of the christian universe, and measuring the same steps which the wise, the great, the good of every nation during the long lapse of nineteen centuries, have confidently trod before you. Rejoice in these recollections. Only while you rejoice in being thus united among yourselves, and with the saints in the purity of your faith, labour also to be united among yourselves and with them in the sanctity of your morals.

As for the errors and disunity of our protestant brethren—and ah! these greatly damp the satisfactions of our security—let us view them without

animosity, and blame them without severity—rather let us view them with pity, and if we blame, blame them with the tender reproach of charity. There is, indeed, much to blame in the crimes of those, who in the habits of shepherds, but with the hearts of wolves, first broke down the fences of the sacred fold, and bade the sheep disperse—so, too, there is in the interested industry of those who still withhold them from returning to the sacred pastures. But in the wanderings of the sheep—at least, in the wanderings of an immense multitude of them—there is much to excite compassion, and much for charity to excuse. There is the force of prepossession and prejudice created by the habits of a pernicious education, and maintained by the zeal of fanaticism; there are the influences of ignorance fed by misrepresentation, fortified by the declamations of the pulpit; there is the difficulty of acquiring information, which is the fate of many who have neither the facilities of obtaining catholic books, nor the means of cultivating catholic acquaintance. There are these, with some other similar and subordinate causes, which, I greatly flatter myself, will plead powerfully in excuse of the errors of our fellow brethren. To me this hope is soothing in the extreme. It is soothing to me to feel, that there is aught which may extenuate the misfortunes of a class of men, among whom it is my happiness, as it is my honour, to

number several of my warmest friends—friends, to whose kindness and liberality I owe the largest tribute of my gratitude, and the best tokens of my acknowledgment. However, since error is always an evil, and almost always a crime—since truth is one of the established mediums of salvation, let us, my brethren, secure of its possession ourselves, supplicate the divine mercy, that its beams may be poured upon them, and upon the minds of all who are seated in the shades of heresy. Let us fervently pray, that, ceasing to adore the visions of their fancy, and to venerate the illusions of a false liberty, they may discover the real sanctuary of religion, and become the humble worshippers at its altars. Let us pray, that for ever united ourselves in the *one fold* under the direction of the *one shepherd*, they too may be joined to our happy number; and that, forming one society in this life, we may also form one joyful society, in the life to come.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

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On the necessity of investigating the true religion.

Whoever admits the importance of religion, must also, of course, admit the importance of its investigation; and whoever admits the existence of *only one religion*, must, evidently, also admit the *necessity* of its investigation—must admit that its discovery, if attainable, is not only the dictate of piety, but the mandate of duty. The reason is, because if there exist but *one religion*, then the doctrines of this religion only, are the objects of our belief; its precepts only have the power to bind the will; its cultivation only is the principle of our salvation. Considered in this point of view—if this view of religion be correct—it is evident that as it is the first of our obligations to attend

to our eternal interests, so it is the first of our obligations to study well the medium of their attainment.

Now, that such is really the nature of the true religion, is a circumstance, which only that impiety contests, which denies the existence of revelation. The good sense of every rational believer admits it as incontestible. Religion, all these allow—and they allude to one religion only—religion is the law of God communicated to mankind, containing precepts which it is our duty to obey, and doctrines which it is our obligation to believe. It is the obedience of the former united with the belief of the latter, that constitutes what we usually denominate a *christian*—forms the rule of his actions and opinions here, and the basis of his future expectations in the life to come.

It would be wrong, within the limits of a note, to insert a series of proofs that it is in the power of God to impose restraints upon the understanding, to compel our reason to venerate certain doctrines, and to render the errors which are opposed to these doctrines criminal. It would be also wrong, for the same reason, to dwell upon the proofs that he has actually done so. The evidence of the former circumstance is incontestible. He can—such is his power and our dependence—he can, as easily, impose restraints on the understanding, as he can upon the will; and ordain, with equal justice,

that the disbelief of the doctrines which he teaches, shall be sinful as the violation of the precepts which he imposes. The evidence, too, of the latter is admitted by the believers of revelation. God has imposed restraints upon the understanding. He has proposed doctrines to our belief—declared, that the disbelief of them is criminal, and even hung round the crime of disbelief with the same awful menaces and punishments with which he threatens and avenges the violation of his precepts. *He that does not believe, he says, shall be damned.* (St. Mark, xvi. 16.)

These maxims are so luminous, that I could adduce a host of witnesses from almost every sect of protestantism to attest them. “*True doctrine,*” says Dr. Rennel, “*is the vital substance of religion. without this a church is a dead and putrid carcase, cumbering the ground in which it is placed ; its ceremonies are idle mockery ; its ministers burthensome and useless stipendiaries on the public.*” Indeed, the body of our national clergy, with one assent, admit this important principle, and, at least four times in the year, proclaim it solemnly to the public.—“Whoever,” they awfully call out on these occasions, “whoever will be saved, *before all things, it is necessary,* that he hold the catholic faith; which faith,” they add, with still more awful and terrific energy, “except every one do keep *whole and undefiled, without doubt,* he shall perish ever—

lastingly.” Of the unity of truth, and the unity of the christian establishment, I could produce witnesses even from the schools of modern philosophy; from our Bolingbrokes and Shaftesbury’s, from the D’Alemberts and Diderots—for incredulity itself, under the occasional impulse of reason, stands forward, sometimes, the defender of religion. “The word of God,” says Bolingbroke, “is *one*; and *one* religion only *can* be taught by it. There is but *one foundation* laid; and therefore, but *one* religion formed.”

The first consequence which results from these principles, is this, that the disbelief of the true religion, and the belief of error are, therefore, criminal—the disbelief of the true religion, because it is an act of disobedience to the positive command of God, whose veracity it either impeaches, or whose power it virtually contests—the belief of error, because it is the substitution of the dreams of the imagination, in the room of the maxims of eternal wisdom, and implies the proud erection of a human tribunal to judge “the unsearchable ways of God.” Both are criminal, because both are disorders of the understanding, and both violations of the injunctions of the laws of revelation.

But, to consider error, merely in itself, independently of the laws of revelation, which make it sinful—independently of the causes which give it birth, of the effects which it produces, or of

any attachment of the understanding to its suggestions—abstracting from all these circumstances, it is obvious, that error can, in no case, and on no occasion, be a pleasing tribute from the creature to the divinity. God is essentially the God of truth; and error, therefore, is essentially repugnant to his attributes. He is the God of truth, as he is the God of virtue and perfection, and therefore he can no more be pleased with error than he can be pleased with vice. To be pleased with either, he must cease to love himself. Of course, as error cannot possibly be pleasing to the Almighty, it can never, although it often appear the effect of simplicity and accident—and although often attended with sincerity and piety—it can never be the basis of meritorious faith—never constitute the platform of rational hope; never form the rock of true and genuine charity. “There can be but one religion,” says Bishop Horne, “that is true, and the God of truth cannot be pleased with falsehood.”*

* It has been asserted, of late years, but by men who are more distinguished for their classical, than theological learning, that variety in religion, like variety in nature, is pleasing to the Divinity. The assertion is not unfrequently re-echoed by the libertine and the Socinian,—by a class of young men, in particular, who talking much, yet thinking little, and knowing less, are for ever discussing the serious subject of religion. God pleased with variety in religion! Why,

Neither does this principle apply only to the mass of profane errors, or to a certain description of errors which may appear particularly repugnant to some of the leading doctrines of religion. It applies to each, or every error, that is opposed to each or every truth that God has imparted to his creatures. The reason is,—since each doctrine of religion is true, and revealed, in order to be believed—since each doctrine emanates from the same wisdom—sanctioned by the same authority, revealed in the same manner, and commanded to be venerated under the same awful menace,—of course, each truth demands the same unhesita-

to the apprehension of good sense the idea is childish, and to the feelings of piety, it is little short of blasphemy. Variety, in its general acceptation, is, no doubt, amusing; and when it is the result of wisdom, it is calculated, certainly, to excite gratification and delight. But variety in error, which is unreasonable and wrong—variety in falsehood, which is criminal and forbidden—variety in confusion, which is disorderly and vicious, surely never can be pleasing to the God of truth and order. Even human wisdom reprobates variety like this. To God, it evidently must be odious. I am partial to some of the sentiments of the excellent Bishop Horne, and will here present a short extract of his opinion upon the subject of variety in religion. It is a very sensible confirmation of what I assert. But another reason for inserting it is, to hold out one of those palpable contradictions, which are for ever recurring in protestantism.—“The system of comprehension,” says the good Bishop,

ting faith, and each error, which, under such circumstances, is opposed to any individual doctrine, is criminal and profane. In reality, there is nothing in religion, nothing in the sacred scriptures, nothing in reason itself, that would seem to sanction the disbelief of any single article of revelation, or to excuse that liberty which presumes to worship error in its stead. Even under the comparatively unimportant conventions of civil society, the member of each state is bound to obey each law which the state enacts; and he is punished if either he oppose its operation, or violate its provisions. Not even the ignorance of the provisions

“which admits the jarring sects and opinions into the church, is jumbling together an undigested heap of contrarieties into the same mass, and making the old chaos the plan of the *new reformation*.” This is the language of wisdom.—Now for the contradiction. I will state the contradiction upon the unexceptionable testimony of Mosheim. “*If men,*” says the learned historian, “*only take care to avoid too great intimacy with socinianism and popery, they are deemed worthy members of the reformed church. Hence,*” he adds, “*in our times, this great and extensive community comprehends in its bosom Arminians, Calvinists, Supralapsarians, Sublapsarians, Universalists.*”—(Cent. 18.) Most certainly; if the maxims of the Bishop be correct—and they are the maxims which I have quoted as those of the English clergy—then the conduct of the reformed churches is preposterous. The *new reformation*, as described by Mosheim, is the image of the *ancient chaos*, as described by Horne.

of a law, nor any error respecting its obligations, are at a civil tribunal, justifications of its violation or neglect. But, in short, to consult only the first notions which each one entertains of the character of a christian—he only is, really, a christian, who professes *all* the doctrines of Jesus Christ. Whoever professes only part of them, or professes error in their place, is, of course, only, in part, a christian—and a christian, in part, is in reality no christian at all. He is a mere human philosopher, with the name and mantle of a christian. It is at his peril, that man errs.

However, it is not—heaven forbid I should—it is not that I mean to pass the same severe sentence of criminality upon all disbelief, or error, indiscriminately. Whatever criminality I have yet assigned to error, I meant to assign it only to wilful error—to error, which is the effect of indifference, of inattention, of pride or passion—to error, which refuses to investigate its illusions, or which cherishes them with partiality. And error of this nature, (I think, I have proved it,) is criminal. There are errors, I hope, which are excusable; or, if not excusable, whose shades of criminality are certainly extremely different from the darkness of the sin which I have just described. There are men in the walks of life, who err, yet who honestly seek to instruct their ignorance, and to resign their errors. Such men are true belie-

vers, in desire, and unbelievers, by misfortune.— Their errors are an object of pity, not of censure. There are some, who, sensible of their errors, endeavour seriously to correct them; but deluded by prejudice, endeavour to correct them by improper methods—others, who, suspecting that the tenets which they profess are false, are for ever in quest of truth, but misled by misrepresentation, look for it in paths that do not conduct to its abode—others, who admitting all the dangers of error, would willingly embrace the truth; but not possessing the facilities of discovering it, are also without the ardour to investigate it with sufficient industry. The shades of criminality in the errors of these men, while different from each other, are also very different from the errors of the dissipated, the indifferent and the vicious. The tenderness of charity centures them with compassion. She pities, and she blames them—pities them, because in reality, they seek for the truth; blames them because they seek it by ineffectual methods—pities them, because their errors are not voluntary in themselves; blames them, because they are voluntary in their causes—because they do not employ all those measures and precautions which the necessity of truth and the importance of salvation ask for; because, while they read the works, or listen to the voice of men, who industriously misrepresent the doctrines of catholicity, they pertinaciously

refuse to consult the writings, or to attend to the language of those who represent them accurately. Not the broadest liberality, if reasonable, can excuse religious error, which care, investigation, piety, and impartiality would remove.

Hence, since such is the importance and necessity of truth in the great system of revelation—since salvation is attached to its belief, and reprobation to its rejection, the consequence is obvious, that, as nothing to the feelings of reason is half so desirable as salvation, nothing to the instincts of wise self-love half so frightful as reprobation, so the knowledge of the means, by which the former may be secured and the latter avoided, is, evidently, the most momentous object which can chain down the attention, or absorb the industry of mankind. The knowledge of the true religion is not one of those secondary acquirements, which, whoever is not secure of its possession is at liberty, I do not say to neglect, but to study without unremitting assiduity. First object of his interest, it should be also the first object of his zeal,—first principle of his happiness, it should be also the first principle of his ambition. The importance, in short, of any means is estimated by the importance of its end; and the knowledge of truth being an essential means of salvation, is, consequently, correlative with the importance of salvation. Of course, again, ignorance, where industry can remove it, is not only

the want of wisdom, it is also the want of common sense and common self-love.

When, indeed, I take a view of the state of society, I by no means wonder that the investigation of truth is rare. Corrupted as society is, and absorbed in the pursuits of pleasures, riches, and human interests, I should wonder rather to behold it common. As vice is almost universal—and truth is odious to vice, because it restrains its evagations—so the neglect of knowledge will nearly keep pace with the prevalence of vice. There are, too, opposed to the study of our religion—besides the prevalence of vice, various other causes—the power of prejudice, the influence of education, the control of fanaticism, and the tyranny of human respect. Ours is that religion which is peculiarly unpleasing to sensuality and the senses, because it is a system of mortification and restraint.—Ours is that religion, which the illiberality of the state excludes from honors, pensions, profits, and employments. Therefore, taking society as it is—considering the nature of its propensities, and the maxims of its philosophy, which are first to provide for this world, and then only for the next—considering all this, there is no great room for wonder, that the investigation of catholicity is not common.

However, all in society are not dissipated and vicious; all in this island, in particular, are not

unreasonable and unthinking, and therefore, although I do not wonder, that the investigation of truth is not common, yet, I wonder that it is so *uncommon* as it is. Allowances, no doubt, must be made for the difference of aspect, in which, from the varieties of dispositions, pursuits, and situations, men see the features of different objects. To me, as my pursuits incessantly fix my mind upon the importance of religion, religion must naturally appear more interesting than to those who only occasionally turn their attention to it. But, after all, it is not bigotry to assert, that not only the indifference of the great herd of society who refuse to seek out the paths of truth, is the extreme of folly—their's is perhaps equally great, who possessing a love of truth, and the means of finding it—possessing dispositions for virtue, and even practising virtue in a certain method—yet, victims to prejudice, and the sport of illusion—cheated by misrepresentation, and deceived by ignorance, sit down indolently secure, affectionately caressing a monster, which in its generation, is the offspring of passion, and in its effects, may prove the principle of their reprobation. Indolence is an act of folly, where only the body is exposed to danger; but it is the worst kind of folly, where the soul is exposed to ruin. And hence, how singular ought it to appear, that even among men reputed virtuous and wise—among men, who in every other pur-

suit, are distinguished for their prudence and assiduity—men, who, in all other cases, are restless and uneasy till they possess the conviction of complete security—who, when there is question merely of ascertaining the accuracy and validity of a title-deed, are all solicitude and industry—how singular, that even among these, indifference to the most serious and momentous of all their interests, should not only be common, but almost universal! I have already called their conduct folly, and therefore it is needless to say, that it forms a frightful contrast with the wisdom of those holy men, who have seen the lamp of life extinguished in the study of religion—of those martyrs, who have shed their blood in its defence—of those great and respectable characters in every age, who have sought it amid dangers and persecutions, and sacrificed to its possession every human and social comfort. Certainly, every thing is extremely reprehensible and extremely alarming in this conduct.

With my mind convinced of the importance of religious truth, and my reason impressed with the nature of protestant principles, I have sometimes placed myself in imagination, in the situation of a protestant, and it has always seemed to me, that did I reason only from those principles, the keenest reproach of indiscretion would meet my feelings—harrowing up my sensibility, and terrifying my

apprehensions. What! it appears to me, I should often say, what! there is but one true religion; and what security with my principles can I possibly possess, that mine is that only true one? There is but one path to heaven, and what conviction have I as a protestant, that the path in which I walk, is that which will lead me to it? As a protestant, if I be a consistent one, I have no security, no conviction, but my own private judgment; and since that is so often misled—since it is opposed, in the circumstance of religion, not only to the judgment of the infinitely larger portion of the christian world, but even to the whole christian world, during the long lapse of many centuries—how can I be wisely confident, or rationally secure, that it may not—that it does not here impose upon my credulity? No doubt my insecurity is incontestible; and therefore, if wise, as I know there is but one path to heaven—as I know that my salvation depends upon walking in it—as I know too that my life is uncertain, and that even to-morrow may, possibly, call me to the divine tribunal--if wise, it is evidently urgent that I immediately and seriously attempt to find it out, not suffering my industry to repose, till I can without apprehension feel that my confidence is not rashness, nor my security presumption. Thus, it seems to me, would my sensibility reason, were I a protestant. It is certainly thus that the protestant should reason.

In life, no one is completely reasonable, but he that knows the true religion, or he that seeks it properly—no one completely happy, but he that is secure of professing it. Doubt and insecurity in such case—and it must be the case of the consistent protestant—are unhappiness and folly. Let then the adversaries of our religion, suspending, at least, their prejudices against it, let them consult its maxims and study its claims to their veneration.—It has claims to their veneration, of which they are not aware. Conducted by the hand of wisdom, let them only have the fortitude to survey them.—It is the religion which long and alone enlightened all the civilized portions of the universe, expelled the darkness and clouds of idolatry and superstition, and numbered among its professors the learned and virtuous of fifteen centuries. It is the religion which still sheds its beams over every part of the globe—the religion of the most polished and extensive kingdoms; and the religion too, which immense multitudes, in each of these great divisions—the learned, the wise, the philosopher, the statesman, and the hero—deem it their happiness and their honor to adore. With these claims, had it even no other—but it has countless others—with these claims only, it should, to any mind that is not ruled by prejudice, appear to merit investigation. The consequence would be—let who it may, be the fortunate man that makes it

—he will, I do not say, embrace our religion—his passions, his interests, his self-love, may preclude that effect—he will, at least, respect it; he will own, that it is very different from what his ignorance had been taught unjustly to suppose it—own that while his own faith rests upon a pillar of sand, the faith of the catholic rests securely upon the centre of a rock—while his own confidence reposes upon conjectures, possibilities, and perhaps, the confidence of the catholic reposes, in calm conviction, upon that immortal and immovable basis, which though buffeted, incessantly, during the lapse of eighteen centuries, “not the powers of hell have been able to overthrow.”

Contre tous les dangers l'Eglise nous rassure;
La raison est douteuse; et la foi toujours sure.

BERNIS.

(B) PAGE 7.

The protestant, by his principles, peculiarly obliged to investigate the truth of religion.

THE circumstance which constitutes the chief difference between the catholic and the protestant, and which must, for ever, while it subsists, keep open the unhappy breach between their respective

communities, is the difference of the principles which guide the wisdom or weakness of their reason, or which regulate the nature and convictions of their belief. The catholic conceiving, that the great legislator, who has communicated his laws and a system of religion to mankind, has also established a tribunal to watch over their observance, and secure their integrity, reveres the authority of his church, as a rule, which, in cases of perplexity and doubt, he believes it more rational and safe to follow, than the dictates of his private fancy. Indeed, induced by good sense to conceive, that such an institution is essential, if the unity of faith be essential, and convinced by the strongest evidences of the sacred scriptures, that it has really been established, he considers the pastors of his church as the interpreters of the law of revelation, and the organs of the divine authority. He reveres their decisions *as infallible*. The discussion, of course, which is the result of doubt—the examination, which is the effect of insecurity, are circumstances which he considers superfluous and improper. It is even a contradiction, that he who admits an infallible authority as the guide of his belief, should look upon the investigations of his own fancy, as essential to his security.—But, *the protestant*, diametrically the reverse of all this—bold and intrepid in his ideas—emancipated and free in his judgment, establishes, as the sole

rule and arbiter of his belief, the dictate of his own opinion, reposing upon the dictate of his own examination. Conceiving, that the church had fallen into error, and that all assemblages of men, because men, are liable to error—considering that all extraneous authority is unstable, fallible, and human, and therefore, *as unstable*, inadequate to give belief its proper firmness, for faith is essentially immoveable—*as fallible*, unequal to insure it a necessary degree of confidence, for faith admits no doubts—*as human*, impossible to form a substantial basis, for faith must be divine—considering also, that the use of reason is to investigate and examine, and that Paul commands the faithful (1 Thes. v. 21.) *to examine all and to hold only to what is good*—considering all these circumstances, he concludes,—and it is the leading maxim of his religion,—that faith and security have no other wise foundation than the conviction of individual reason resting upon the process of individual examination, comparison, and discussion. The adoption of this principle was, indeed, the necessary result of the rejection of the authority of the church. Circumstanced as Luther was, the reformation could not proceed without it. Accordingly, it was the first maxim which he pressed upon his bold but deluded followers. “*Why,*” he said often to them, “*why make so much noise, and eternally tease us, with the name of the church.*”

Know, that we judge the church, and the apostles and angels too. Only read ; and, as the apostle tells you, hold to that, which you find is good." The principle has not died away with Luther. It has been the fundamental principle of protestantism, through every period to the present. When it is done away, the fabric of protestantism falls to ruin. "It is," says the orthodox Dr. Prettyman, "the unalienable privilege of every christian to form his own religious opinions, and to worship God, in the manner which appears to him most agreeable to the scriptures. And every diminution of this right, every mode of compulsion, and every species of restraint, which is not required by the public safety, is inconsistent with the idea of a moral agent, and in the strongest degree repugnant to the spirit of the gospel." (Serm. before the lords.) "If any man," says the learned Archbishop of Tuam, "neglect to inquire into the religion which he has embraced, let him not think that God will excuse him at the last day, on the pretext that his parents or friends brought him up in that religion. A Jew, a Turk, or a heathen might excuse himself in the same manner. No, look into your bibles, there you will find, St. Paul directs you to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good. It is impossible to distinguish false from true teachers, unless a man tries, examines, and searches into their doctrines." But it is Dr. Wat-

son, whose words I have often quoted, and often shall quote, who most correctly, and most classically, defines the nature of the religion of the protestant. It is, he says, "*et sentire quæ velit et quæ sentiat loqui—to believe what he pleases, and to profess what he believes.*"* "Hence," he adds, with great consistency, "*we are far from wishing you to trust the word of the clergy, for the truth of*

* The above definition of protestant liberty is taken from Tacitus, and expresses the broad measure of liberty which prevailed under the reigns of Nerva and Trajan. There are men whose supercilious judgments have thought, that it would have been more becoming the prudence or learning of a bishop to have produced a definition of religious liberty from St. Paul, rather than from a pagan. But the case is, there is nothing in St. Paul that expresses the nature of protestant liberty, either so accurately or so neatly. However, I do think, that, if indeed it were wise to fetch the definition of the christian religion from pagans at all,—the definition of Seneca would have been, though not quite so correct yet wiser, and from a bishop, more judicious. *Illud credere quod decet, non quod licet—to believe, not what each one pleases, but what is right;* because as another old writer of similar proverbs or sentences say, "*Cui omne licet credere quod vult, plus vult credere quam licet; the man that is allowed to believe all that he chooses, will choose to believe more than he should believe.*" But, after all, as the definition expresses very accurately the nature of the boundless liberty of the philosophical system of protestant theology, I prefer it to any other which accident has ever cast into my way from any other protestant divine. Dr. W. is the most consistent protestant divine with whose writings I am conversant.

your religion; we beg of you to examine it to the bottom, to try it, to prove it, and not to hold it fast, unless you find it good."

Therefore, examination is the essential obligation of every individual protestant. No one, by the maxims of protestantism, is wise, consistent, or rationally secure without it. The circumstance of professing himself the member of any particular establishment, because he was born, baptized, and educated in it, is by these maxims, the veriest prejudice, and the most dangerous credulity which his weakness or his reason can adopt. Each member of each protestant establishment is such, *by his own maxims*, because, after mature discussion, he has convinced his own good sense, that the tenets of such establishment are alone unadulterate and divine. Were he a member upon any other principle, he would violate the most essential maxim of the reformation—build protestant faith upon a popish basis—or rather, as some of the reformers observed to Luther, he would, if consistent, run back to the pale of popery. In short, it is true and incontestible, that by the leading maxim of protestantism, no one is a consistent protestant, whose belief does not lean upon the conviction of his own reason, resulting from the process of examination and comparison. Thus, the believer of the 39 articles is such, not because his church or his father believes the 39 articles, but because

after weighing them seriously, he has discovered, as he supposes, that they are true. The Lutheran is such, not because Luther believed, or "said so," but because he has ascertained, that what Luther believed and said, is divine. The Calvinist such, not upon the authority of Calvin, but upon the evidence, that Calvin's doctrines are revealed.—Each, in each establishment, is as much obliged to discuss the tenets of his religion, as the man who formed it first—the Anglican, as much as Cranmer; the Lutheran, as much as Luther; the Calvinists, as much as Calvin. Whatever may be the piety, talents, or learning of these apostles, or indeed of any number of men, although in a variety of cases, and on many subjects their authority may create a strong presumption of their truth and evidence, yet in religion, by the constitution of protestantism, to believe upon such presumption, is not only very unwise partiality, but, as faith must be divine, and therefore founded upon nothing human, very profane and criminal partiality—the violation of the laws of faith.

I will not pretend to determine to what precise point the labours of protestant investigation should proceed. From the nature of protestant maxims, it should be very widely extended indeed: for as every reformer and heresiarch, with equal confidence, and with equal authority, lays claim to the exclusive possession of the truth, it should extend

to the comparative estimate and merits of each and all their doctrines. This, from the import of protestant principles, however difficult or absurd it may appear, should, in reality, appear necessary. For, why may not what Sabellius, or Donatus, or Arius believed and taught, be equally correct and true, as what Cranmer, or Luther, or Calvin have intruded upon their followers? However, as such discussion is impossible, although by a foolish principle necessary, I will suppose and admit, that wisdom may dispense with a considerable portion of it. The investigation of every religion, in order to ascertain the true one, would be like the experiment of trying every kind of medicine, in order to find out the best.

But behold, at least, what no protestant can neglect, both without the violation of his own principles, and the violation of the interest which he is bound to feel for his salvation. He has abandoned and divorced himself from the bosom of his parent church; from that society, which once the only prevailing, is still the principle one, which enlightens and guides the christian universe—he has detached himself from it, and associated himself to a society created within the interval of a few years, under the auspices of a few obscure individuals. The act of separating from one church, and of associating with another, is, certainly, not only of its own nature, infinitely momentous,

but, if the former should chance to be the true church, and the latter, consequently, spurious, it is one of the most dreadful acts which reason, in its evagations, or the passions, in their violence, can commit. Even the intrepidity of Luther trembled at its danger. *"I turned pale,"* he says, *"and often stood aghast, on the brink of the precipice, which seemed to yawn beneath me."* It evidently calls loudly for serious investigation. It is evidently prudent, that the man who ventures to perform it, should know well the grounds and motives of his conduct—should know well the doctrines, and examine well the mutual claims of the two churches, which he thus places in competition, in order that he may be rationally convinced of the superior excellence of that, to which he thinks proper to give the preference. This, it will be allowed, was necessary, or wise at least, at the awful period of the reformation, for men who had been born, baptized, and educated in the bosom of catholicity. Well, the necessity of such knowledge and examination is just equally urgent at the present epoch, as it was on that occasion; not merely because the conviction which arises from examination, is the acknowledged basis of protestant belief—not merely because the authority of the protestant establishment is no authority, to the protestant, since he considers it essentially fallible—but because (the influences of example apart)

it is just as criminal, at present, to remain separated from the church of Christ, as it was, at the period of the reformation, to separate from it; just as sinful to continue in the wilful abandonment of the truth, as it was, at first, wilfully to abandon it. In both cases the crime is great, because, in both cases there is a rejection of what God had commanded should be believed, and the adoption of what he had reprobated, under the threat of eternal punishment. As for the age of error, or the duration of the interval of separation from the true church, or the circumstance of being born of parents who have been long separated from it, these are no more apologies for the profession of error, or for the continuation in such separation, than the age of vice, or the long practice of vice, or the misfortune of being born of vicious parents, are excuses for the perpetration of vice. Indeed, comparing the conduct of the modern protestant, with that of the first protestant separatist (whose conduct, it is universally admitted, nought could justify, but the strong conviction of the errors of his parent church operating from the knowledge of its tenets)--comparing their conduct together, and measuring both by the principles of protestantism, there is no doubt, but by those maxims, the conduct of the former, and his distance from the parent institute, is often less justifiable than the actual separation of the latter. *No separation,*

by protestant principles, is justifiable, which is not the effect of conviction proceeding from serious examination. Therefore, if the modern protestant have examined the subject less seriously than the early separatist, if his conviction be less enlightened, of course, his conduct is less justifiable, and his continuation in the state of separation from the ancient church, by another consequence, is more criminal. Yes, and did I even suppose and admit, that Luther and his associates acted right in detaching themselves from the church, yet would it be—I have proved it—a violation of the rule of protestantism to abandon it, or to remain in a state of separation from it, *upon their authority*; because by that rule, authority is nothing; self-conviction alone is every thing—wisdom, light, grace, the voice of the divinity. But, suppose the case, that Luther and these men had acted wrong! Then, doubtless, it is wrong to imitate them. There is nothing in reason or religion to justify the imitation of them; because there is nothing in reason or religion that justifies the imitation of bad example—particularly when the criminality or the impropriety of the example can be detected. In short—for I have dwelt too long upon the proofs of what hardly needed any proof—such, by the maxims of the reformation, is the necessity of an enlightened conviction of truth, and such by the injunctions of revelation, the necessity of its profession, that

there is nothing that can justify the wilful rejection of its doctrines; nothing that can excuse the wilful separation from its authority. In religion, I have said before, whoever errs, errs at the peril of damnation. It is equally said of the misleader and the misled (although, certainly, the measure of their punishments will differ)—it is equally said, *whoever believes not shall be condemned.*

Therefore, should the protestant's disbelief and rejection of catholicity, to be consistent, be essentially enlightened—the result of calm discussion, and the effect of impartial comparison. But it is when I come to investigate his claims to these acts of wisdom—when I measure his knowledge of our religion, I know not what I most experience, whether contempt for his ignorance, astonishment at his inconsistency, or pity for his insensibility to the awful interests of his salvation. I have read a multitude of our modern protestant writers—I have conversed with a considerable number of the more polished members of the establishment—and I have ascertained what is the share of information, which in the lower walks of life, the vulgar possess of our religion: and I have no hesitation in asserting it—the writer possesses *little*—the gentlemen *less*—the vulgar *none*. I will not attribute the strange assertions of our protestant writers to wilful misrepresentation. I would rather impeach the head than the heart; the understanding, rather than the

will: and therefore, considering them as the results of their opinion, and the combinations of their ideas—there is no boldness in saying it—they are ignorant, stupidly ignorant, of our tenets. Or, if indeed, they do know them, then they are malevolent and criminally illiberal in our regard. I could produce—and shall indeed produce in the series of this work—extracts from the works of many protestant writers, which proves a measure of ignorance, that is disgraceful to the scholar, and a degree of illiberality, that is still more disgraceful to the man.

The circumstance of the extreme ignorance of catholicity, which prevails in this nation, is singular. It is singular that in a nation, whose writers are innumerable, and where almost every writer drags the catholic religion into notice, nothing is so little known as the catholic religion. You see it, with solemn insult, derided in nearly every publication, and its mysteries, insulted objects! you find them, every where, refuted with a weight of authority that resembles infallibility—with an air of triumph that mocks the force of evidence. In reality, to judge from these works, there is no species of evidence that is half so evident, as the absurdity of popish doctrines; and yet, amidst this host of enlightened adversaries, I do honestly believe—neither am I singular in my belief—that there are scarce twenty individuals, who have made

the principles and tenets of popery the serious objects of their candid investigation. I should be glad to know the protestant, who, under the guidance of the leading maxim of protestantism,—with wisdom to diffide in his own religion, and with courage to interrogate ours, has made ours the subject of his meditations and industry—has traced its features in their proper forms and attitudes—consulted the writers who represent it accurately—its advocates, not its enemies—or if its enemies, its advocates, as well as them—has appreciated the truth of our mysteries, not by the fallacious testimony of the senses, but by the wise attestations of well authenticated revelation—has employed that time, assiduity, and method, in verifying the divinity or corruption of our religion, which he would do, or perhaps has done, in verifying the authenticity or falsehood of a title deed, or in the examination of a suit or litigation, upon which his fortune and his comforts may depend in life. Alas! much, I fear, that the wisdom of protestant piety produces few inquirers of this description. May God increase their number!

As for the ignorance of our religion, which prevails either in the polished circles of society, among the occupied, or the vulgar, though there is much reason to blame, there is little reason to wonder at it. Where the real fountains of knowledge are stopped up, and its streams supplied only

from the feculence of error, and the exhalations of malevolence—and where these are the only sources, from which the protestant public derive their notions of catholicity, of course, it would be vain to look for any thing like wise and accurate information among them. But even this circumstance apart, in the great circle of society, the rich are too much emersed in pleasure, the busy are too busy, and the vulgar too indolent, to make truth the serious subject of their industry; above all, where it is of such nature as to place restraints upon their passions.

The world is generally averse
To all the truth it hears and sees;
But swallows nonsense and a lie,
With greediness and gluttony.

However, it is not the mere aversion which the world in general entertains for truth, nor even the impurity of the source from which the protestant draws his opinions of catholicity, that alone are the causes of his ignorance of our doctrines. By an act of inconsistency, which is quite unpardonable in a religion which bids each member "*examine all things, and hold fast that only which is true;*" (Thes. v. 21.)—which commands each individual to be (by this process of examination) *fully persuaded in his own mind*; (Rom. xvi. 5.)—the zeal of the protestant clergy endeavours to shut up

to the laity, as they do indeed to themselves, the only sources from which the correct knowledge of our doctrines can be acquired. They derive their flocks from the limpid stream to the muddy ditch. Examine all things, they call out, but beware not to examine the writings of the catholics; see you attend not to their instructions, nor even frequent their society. Thus did the late liberal and enlightened Dr. Porteus, after the equally liberal and enlightened Archbishop Secker, caution the protestant public; thus, recently, has acted the timid and pious Dr. Shute, and thus, incessantly, act a great portion of the established clergy. "*We accuse,*" they add, "*the papists of errors,*" (*which the papists, they should add also, very positively deny.*) "The accusation is extremely important." (*And their denial of it, they should again add, if well founded, is as important as the accusation.*) However, *no matter; believe the accusation; and disregard, entirely, the denial: be sure not to attend to any proofs, or evidence, or vindication, which the advocates of popery bring forward in its support.* Such is the general process of protestant wisdom in our regard. What a mockery of justice, what an insult to common sense! It is the same thing as to say, "Examine and believe what is false, but neither discuss, nor give any credit to what is true; believe the accuser, who is an enemy, but deny a hearing to the accused." The same thing

as to say, "Examine religion, if you please, but examine not the only religion, which it is most your duty to discuss—or if you do examine it, examine it not in the mediums where you may really trace its divinity, but in those which misrepresent it—in the writings of men, who either know it not, or who knowing it, deride it. And behold, it is precisely thus that popery is examined. Setting aside every maxim, which he, every day, pursues in every other interest, the protestant judges and decides upon the contested subject of catholicity—a subject the most momentous that can engage his piety—from the partial and angry documents of interested adversaries, from falsehoods, nonsense, and fabrications. So great is the hostility which the declaimers against popery have impressed upon the public mind, that a popish vindication is seldom read, a popish protestation seldom heeded. Not eloquence, upon this subject, nor even evidence, have any influence upon the feelings of the protestant. We do sometimes present both, in order to persuade him to be, if not completely wise and just in his *own* regard, at least, not to be completely unwise and unjust in regard of us. But,

His eyes fast shut, his fingers in his ears,

he totally disregards us. The consequence is, even

in this age of learning, there are few protestants so enlightened, as not piously to believe that the poor deluded papist honestly adores [his wooden Gods, worships the canvas of his pictures, and looks up for grace to the ivory of his 'crucifix—few but either indignantly abhor, or kindly pity us, as idolaters and the sons of Antichrist?

But, what is the conclusion which I deduce from this note? Merely this—that the protestant being, by his own principles, obliged to bottom his faith upon conviction resulting from investigation, and by the interest, which he is bound to feel for his salvation, tied to know well the grounds of his separation from the parent church—is consequently obliged and tied to make the study of the principles and doctrines of catholicity the serious objects of his attention. His refusal to do it is an act of imprudence and inconsistency, which there is nothing in religion, or in his own religion, that can justify. In his own religion, in particular, and according to his own principles, his conviction, without such investigation, is but prejudice, and his sincerity, but presumption—his piety itself is a flattering illusion, that cheats the weakness of his self-love.—And yet, where is the protestant who has made such investigation? The fact is, few protestants are consistent.

(C) PAGE 7.

On the method of investigating the true religion.

THERE is no circumstance, which in the case where the protestant ventures to discuss our religious tenets, contributes more effectually to confirm his errors, and fix his prejudices, than the method which he, almost uniformly, pursues on such occasion.

It is incontestibly true, that as there is, in the various departments of science, a variety in the nature of the objects which it embraces, and a difference in the nature of its truths, so there must also exist a variety and difference in the modes and principles, which wisdom employs in their investigation. Thus, for example, there is an essential difference between the nature of physical, mathematical, and historical truths; and, of course, there is a difference between the principles and process of reasoning, by which the mind either judges of their certainty, or establishes their evidence. It judges of the certainty, and establishes the evidence of physical truths, by the testimony of the senses; of mathematical truths, by the analogy with the ideas; of historical truths, by

the laws of credibility, as they are known by the rules of criticism. It is so in every branch of science. Each science has its peculiar object, and each object its peculiar principle, by which alone its investigation must be pursued. To investigate the truths of one science, by the principles of another, would be not only a violation of the dictates of good sense, but the prolific source of every species of absurdity.

These principles are evident in regard of human science; and they are, if possible, still more evident in regard of revealed religion. Revealed religion is the manifestation which the divine wisdom has been pleased to make to man, of a code of laws, comprehending a variety of moral precepts for the regulation of his piety, and a certain number of mysterious doctrines, for the exercise of his faith. It were superfluous here to undertake to prove, either that God can thus communicate his will to his creatures, or that he really has communicated it. Both these circumstances are admitted by the whole christian world. The doctrines, therefore, of revelation, it is admitted, which are destined for the exercise of faith, are *mysteries*—objects placed beyond the reach of the human understanding—supernatural objects, which reason cannot measure—abysses, which the imagination cannot fathom. Indeed, whoever supposes such a thing as religion, supposes naturally

such objects as mysteries; because religion being a commerce or relation between God and man, between a Being that is infinite, and a creature that is finite, should obviously comprise something that is supernatural, and something that is natural, something inconceivable, and something conceivable, —something that would prompt the mind to adore the divine greatness, and something that would urge it to obedience and love.

Hence, having determined the nature of revelation, it is evident what also should be the nature of the method by which its investigation should be conducted; and the nature of the principles by which its certainty should be established. The doctrines of revelation are mysterious. Therefore, it is evidently fruitless for reason to attempt to measure them; for that were attempting to measure what it is already supposed as infinite, by the little scale of what is finite. It is fruitless to undertake to compare them with the properties of sensible objects, for that were comparing things which, it is again admitted, have no analogy to each other. The method plainly to ascertain the certainty of a mystery is not with profane boldness, to attempt to penetrate its properties. But, what then is the method which wisdom and piety should pursue? Merely this—ascertain the evidences and attestations of revelation,—ascertain whether the pillar of light, which moves before the mind, be the light

of wisdom and the beam of truth; and whether the point, at which it stops, be also the temple of the Divinity—ascertain then whether in this holy sanctuary God speak and deliver his sacred oracles. In that case, as it is always wise to follow the beam of evidence, and always *necessary* to believe the Divinity when he speaks, the mind, under the conviction that she is evidently commanded to hear his voice, listens, believes, and adores.—But example will best explain the nature, the wisdom, and necessity of this process. Let us suppose that an unbeliever wished to ascertain the truth of christianity. To act by the rules of common sense, he would, in the first place, not instantly immerge his reason into a cloud, which the eye cannot penetrate,—not immediately call before the tribunal of his senses, objects, which are not the objects of the senses. If he did this, his incredulity would be confirmed at once, and he would pronounce christianity to be folly, because himself had the stupidity to discuss it foolishly—No, he proceeds in this manner—beginning with the ancient scriptures, which are the introduction to revelation, and a part of revelation, he studies their authenticity, their veracity, their authority: he weighs the events which they relate; the prophecies which they announce; the figures which they describe; and he applies these to the great mystery which they were destined to prepare, measuring the certainty of the pro-

phacies, by the evidence of their fulfilment, and the signification of the figures, by the reality of their accomplishment. He then discusses the history of the life of Messiah; interrogates his actions, considers his miracles, contemplates his death, views his resurrection. If these evidences satisfy him, he, at once, admits revelation, and as revelation is the voice of God proposing mysteries to his creatures, he hears the mysteries and reveres them—he hears God and believes him.

It is thus the unbeliever reasons, when he discusses, with wisdom, the certainty of revelation; it is thus he acts, when he becomes a christian by the process of rational investigation. As for the circumstance of not being able to comprehend the mysteries of revelation, that neither hurts his feelings, nor distresses even the pride of his reason. He has already convinced himself that they are true,—that they are a new and superior order of things, instituted by God, and by him ordained to be believed by his creatures for the exercise of their obedience. Hence, he reveres them, with humility, without even wishing presumptuously to penetrate their sublimity. Indeed, he reveres them the more, because their sublimity out-measures the little reach of his contracted understanding. Feeling that the distance betwixt God and himself is infinite, so he feels, that it is reasonable to admit, that the distance should be also infinite between

the thoughts of God and his own, or between divine and human objects. In reality, sublimity in religion is a recommendation to religion, not an argument against it; while, at the same time, the docile veneration of the sublimity which reason cannot reach, is the circumstance that gives faith its efficacy and its merit. But, in short, the case is this—*revelation is a fact*; and it is of *this fact only*, that reason can form a judgment. The revealed objects are truths placed out of the circle of human things. It is enough for man to prove, that they certainly are revealed; enough for him to know, that their certainty is sanctioned by the infallibility of the Divinity.

The method that I have delineated, by which the unbeliever investigates the truth of christianity, is precisely the method by which the protestant should discuss the divinity of catholicity. The two cases are exactly, not only analogous, but parallel. *Both are facts*. And the same principles, the same process of reasoning, which establish the former, establish the latter. There is a pillar of light that conducts the inquirer to the sanctuary of catholicity, as it does to that of revelation. There are prophecies which foretel the greatness of the true church; promises, which sanction its stability; figures, which characterize its divinity; and miracles, which confirm it. There are fixed criterions admitted, as I have remarked in the

prelude of my discourse, which point it out, and specifically distinguish it from all the conventicles of error. Well, it is by the light of these, that the protestant should investigate the truth of our religion. He should examine whether the prophecies, the promises, and the figures be fulfilled in its establishment, and whether the voice of miracles confirm their attestations. Admitting the four characteristics of the Nicæan creed, he should examine whether its antiquity reach through every age—its extent diffuse itself through every region—its purity train men to holiness, and its unity link them in the bands of harmony and concord. If, indeed, he find all these circumstances concur; if they be all found realized in the catholic institute, as they are admitted to be the indexes of truth, the consequence is, that he at once admits—he is compelled by his own principles to admit—the divinity of catholicity. As for the mysteries of catholicity, since he is already tutored to the belief of mysteries, by the admission of the christian dispensation, these should not even be a source of hesitation to his reason; because mysteries, he owns, are objects impervious to the eye of reason—the sole evidence of their certainty resulting from the sole circumstance of the evidence of their revelation. Therefore, when once he is assured of the existence of this evidence, in regard of catholicity,—as this is all that his reason pretends wisely

to ascertain, he should, to be consistent, believe the mysteries which this evidence recommends. Such is the method, by which the truth of our religion should be discussed, and such only is the method, by which it can be discussed, consistently. I will not say what would be the result of a discussion thus conducted. But I will venture to say, that whoever seriously undertakes it, upon these principles, will acknowledge, that if indeed the truth of any system is to be tried, and evinced *only by its external evidences*, the truth of catholicity is just as well evinced as the truth of christianity; or that, if catholicity be a fable, christianity is a fiction.

The principles which I have laid down, as the criterion to ascertain the truth or falsehood of catholicity, may indeed be contested by the deist or the Socinian, because they contest,—or rather because they reject them, in their pretended mode of investigating the truth or falsehood of christianity—because profanely bold, they attempt to tear asunder the veil which hangs between the human eye and the sanctuary of the Divinity. But the protestant, who reveres mystery, certainly cannot contest them, because they are the very principles, upon which he believes in christianity, and in protestantism itself.

It is not that many protestants give themselves the trouble to discuss, by any method, the claims

of our religion; neither do they reject its doctrines, because they have ascertained the weakness of the proofs which are supposed to establish them. Such, unfortunately, is the effect of ignorance and prejudice, that while the ignorant reject our doctrines upon no principle whatever, the prejudiced upon no principle but prejudice—even the learned reject them upon no principle, but the most erroneous—a principle, which, in them, as believers of the mysteries of revelation, is completely inconsistent and absurd. The little portion of protestants, whom either curiosity may prompt to interrogate the divinity of our religion, or whom the interests of salvation may induce to study it, almost uniformly commence the important investigation, by consulting, in the first place, the nature of its mysteries—forgetful, quite, of that wise maxim, that the truth of mysteries is evinced by the external proofs alone, which recommend them. They instantly call our mysteries before the tribunal of their reason, measure their “height, length, and depth,” compare them with created objects, or with objects which they can tolerably appreciate, and not finding that they accord, they reject them as absurdities; and the religion, of course, which inculcates them, as a fable. The mystery, which usually, and indeed almost solely, constitutes the criterion, by which the protestant pretends to discuss the claims, or to prove the falsehood of

catholicity is the divine and insulted mystery of transubstantiation. His guide and authority in this discussion are, very wisely, his senses! Because he conceives, as Bishop Porteus, after Secker, remarks, that "*if he cannot be sure of what his senses tell him, he can be sure of nothing,*" he consults his senses.—His senses discover the form, taste, and properties of bread; therefore, he concludes, that it is bread, and that the men, who teach it is not, are imposters—the men, who believe them, fools! Such is the process, by which the protestant judges of the claims of catholicity, and such the authority upon which he solemnly decides them to be absurd! I will not pretend to say, what in this decision is most to be admired, its folly or its profaneness—which most to be condemned, its inconsistency or its insolence. Both are extreme. They bring down religion to a system of human philosophy—places its objects within the same circle as those of nature—confound the principles of one science with those of another; and subject the power and wisdom of the dispensations of the Divinity, to the feeble judgment of a feeble creature. As if God could not ordain what reason cannot comprehend; as if the author of nature could not alter nature's laws; as if—which is the case of transubstantiation—he could not ordain, that the general law of judging of the reality of bodies, by the testimony of the senses, should,

when he pleases it, be suspended. This is what the catholic contends he does. God suspends, we say, in the mystery of transubstantiation, the general law of nature, and to prevent our being deceived by the testimony of the senses, *himself* informs us of the suspension. In such case, the senses cease to be our guide. We consider the testimony or information of the Divinity as the equivalent, at least, of the testimony or information of the senses: *and it is upon His testimony only, that we believe the mystery.*

But, at all events, the mode by which the protestant judges of the truth or falsehood of catholicity, is a violation of protestant maxims, and did he only—as he should do to act consistently—apply it to the discussion of the truth or falsehood of protestantism, he would draw this conclusion—similar to that which I have just stated—that, if catholicity be a fable, protestantism too is a fiction—he would conclude, that both are fictions—that all revealed truth is fiction, because he absurdly discussed it upon erroneous principles. It is the influence of these principles that is daily undermining the fabric of protestantism, and erecting upon its ruins the pandemonium of infidelity. It is well that protestants are not all reasoners. If they did all reason, and reasoned upon these principles, the consequence would be, that the pale of protestantism would soon be converted into the school of

Socinianism, at best. This indeed is what one of the wisest of the philosophists foretels, must, inevitably, be the case ere long. "*A coup sur,*" he says, "*ils deviendront tous Sociniens, pour l'honneur de leur philosophie.*" In reality, what was, or is, the religion of the most distinguished characters, even in this nation, who have followed, or who follow up these principles? Evidently Socinian. (I might, I think, without the imputation of rashness, say more—for, as Socinianism, like protestantism, is but a mere mid-way region in the air, presenting nothing firm for the foot to stand on—I might, without rashness, say, that a great portion of these men were deists.) However, without saying this, how many could I name, whom the piety of the protestant reveres, whose faith was but fancy, and whose religion was but the fortunate combination of happy prejudices.—What were our Newton, Locke, Tillotson, Chillingworth, Stillingfleet, Hoadley, Paley,—but Socinians at best, although with very different shades of credulity and inconsistency? I could too point out several distinguished members of the established church, at the present period, whose works are deeply tinctured with Socinianism, whose logic is Socinian, and who, if they be not really Socinians by profession, should, certainly, be such, "*pour l'honneur de leur philosophie.*"—In effect, whoever, in any system of revealed religion, either be-

lieves, or disbelieves aught upon the principles, by which, I have said, the protestant is induced to disbelieve the tenets of catholicity, should---if only he were consistent---be either a Socinian or a deist. The man who pretends to determine the truth or falsehood of a mystery, by the testimony of his senses, or the measure of his reason, should not, it is certain, be a protestant.

Each science then, as I have laid it down, as the basis of this note---each science has its own peculiar principles---philosophy its own---theology its own. Apply them properly, and they lead to truth; confound them, and they generate error. It is from this confusion of principles, that error has pullulated with such prolific fecundity. "*Allow me only,*" says Bayle, "*to confound the principles of the sciences, and to reason from a wrong principle, and I can prove any thing.*" Yes, and even without this confusion of principles, suppose---which is a less deviation from wisdom---suppose a mere mistake in the application of right principles, such is the nature of truth, and the nature of logic, the consequences thus deduced must, inevitably, be wrong. An error in the mode of reasoning, as well as an error in the principle or præmissæ, is always a source of error in the conclusion, just as naturally as a wrong calculation in any part of a sum in arithmetic must render the whole product incorrect. But it is in theology, still more than in

any other science, that these maxims should be observed—in theology, that science of all others the most sacred and sublime, whose truths are “immeasurable as the thoughts of God,” and whose mysteries are as unfathomable as the divine abysses, neither proportioned to the measure of the little sphere of the human understanding, nor analogous, in their nature, to the properties of created things. I will just remark, that, as Plato expelled from his school, whoever, even upon the objects of human sciences, adopted erroneous principles for their guide, so should christianity reject from its sanctuary, all those paralogistic reasoners, who pretending to respect revelation, discuss the claims of catholicity by the nature of its mysteries, and reject its mysteries, because their reason or their senses cannot penetrate them. I am not an enemy to reasoning, only, in the name of philosophy, let men reason with consistency; and in the name of religion, let them reason by the religious principles which they profess.

I might censure some other methods, by which the adversaries of our religion effect to discuss its claims, and to refute its errors. To do this, they often select one of its detached, or only correlative parts—an article, perhaps, that is subordinate to another, upon which it leans as its basis. The consequence is, that considered in this point of view, it appears dark, broken, and imperfect;

just as certain parts of nature or art, considered without relation to the great ends and order to which they should be referred, appear incoherent and inexplicable. The rule, then, which good sense should adopt, when it considers our religion, should be this, not to view it in detached parts, but to contemplate, the *great whole together*: for contemplated thus, it presents to the eye a structure proportioned, although stupendous; and although stupendous, simple—like those harmonic edifices, which the hand of genius has erected, exhibiting new beauties, and proportions each time that they are examined.—Or if, indeed, curiosity will consider the detached parts of our religion, let it consider them, in the order in which they depend upon each other, advancing as along a chain, from link to link, or as in a mathematical demonstration, from proposition to proposition, from antecedent to consequent. Discussed even in this manner, our religion presents the scene of the most pleasing and striking combinations—the results of order, harmony, consistency, and wisdom.

There are others, who pretending to study the claims of our religion, select, as the fittest objects of their examination, *the abuses*, which cast a shade upon its beauty. As if the very instinct of good sense did not reprobate such folly! If abuses were the criterion to ascertain the merits or the demerits of an institution, then should the best and wisest

of institutions, of every order and every description—divine and human, religious and civil, be reprobated and condemned; and, consequently, abolished and annihilated; for among them all, there is not one in which abuses are not common. No doubt, our religion has its abuses. But then, wisdom should inquire—are they parts of its creed, or ingredients in its constitution? Do they form any portion of its principles, of its tenets, or its spirit? Wisdom should ask all this; and it would find, that all the abuses of our religion are parasitical plants introduced and planted in its pastures, by the hands of passion, ignorance, bigotry, and superstition---growing, it is too true, under the broad shade of catholicity, and twining, sometimes,—it is equally too true---their tendrils round its branches; but not growing there naturally, nor constituting any part of its trunk, its branches, or its foliage. I might add also, that these abuses, numerous as they are, would, if candidly examined, be found in general of a nature or import too trifling and insignificant to arrest the notice of good sense.

I pass over several other methods, by which the protestant affects to discuss our doctrines. I will only remark, that few indeed discuss them wisely few discuss them consistently with the dictates of their own principles. Foolish argonauts! affecting to seek for truth, they seek for it upon seas and in

tracts which do not conduct to it; and they seek for it, so very indolently, that did they even seek in the right track, they would not deserve to find it. I am no bigot, when I repeat it,---whoever would rationally and piously discuss our tenets, would discover and acknowledge their divinity.

(D) PAGE 9.

On the unity of the church.

To the various texts which either I have cited, or to which I have alluded in the body of my discourse, I might add several others, which, while they prove, that unity is an essential attribute of truth, prove also, that it is an essential appendage of the true church. In the variety of similies and parables, which allude to the church, it is represented, every where, under the figure of something, which terminates, in unity, or which is remarkable for the closeness of the bands which keep its parts together. It is a "fold," under the guidance "of one shepherd"—a "family," under the authority "of one parent"—a "chosen people," under the control "of one prince." It resembles the human body, in which each member joined together, feels, moves, and acts in concert. "*Wherefore,*" says St. Paul to the Corinthians, "*I beseech*

you, that you all speak the same thing; that there be no divisions among you; that you be perfectly joined together, in the same mind, and in the same judgment,” (1 Cor. i. 10.) “*Mark them,”* he tells the Romans, “*that cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine, which you have learned, and avoid them.*” (Rom. xvi. 17.) “*Walk,”* he exhorts the Philippians, “*by the same rule, mind the same thing.*” (Phil. iii. 16.)

Neither is there in the compositions of modern eloquence, any thing more forcible and expressive, than a multitude of the passages in the ancient fathers respecting the necessity of unity in the church, and the danger and crime of being separated from it. “The chief dignity of the church,” says St. Clement of Alexandria, “like the principle of its construction, reposes upon its unity.” “*Ecclesiæ quoque eminentia, sicut principium constructionis, est ex unitate, nihil habens sibi simile, vel æquale.*” Strom. Lib. 7. “No more,” says Origen, “than the fornicator, or the idolator, can he, who is broken off from the unity of the church, possess eternal life,” “*Sicut hi, qui fornicationibus, immunditiis et idolorum cultibus maculati sunt, regnum Dei non possidebunt, ita et hi, qui in heresim declinaverunt.*” Ep. ad Tit.—“The church,” says St. Cyprian “is one, widely extended by the diffusion of its fecundity; just as there are many rays of light, but one sun; many branches of a tree, but one root;

many streams of water; but one fountain. The church diffuses its rays over all the universe, yet is its light one, and its unity indivisible." *Ecclesia una est, quæ in multitudinem latius incremento fecunditatis extenditur; quomodo solis multi radii, sed unum lumen; et rami arboris multi, sed robur unum, tenaci radice fundatum; et cum de fonte uno rivi plurimi defluunt, numerositas licet diffusa videatur exundantis copię largitate, unitas tamen servatur in origine. Avelle radium solis a corpore, divisionem lucis unitas non capit. Ab arbore frange ramum, fractus germinare non poterit. A fonte præcide rivum, præcisus arescet. Sic ecclesia, Domini luce, per orbem totum radios suos porrigit. Unum tamen lumen est, quod ubique diffunditur; nec unitas corporis separatur. Lib. de unit. Eccl.—“The catholic church alone,” says Lactantius, “retains the true worship; she alone is the source of truth, and the residence of faith.—She alone is the temple of God, into which whoever enters not, or which whoever quits, forfeits the hope of life, and the prospect of salvation.” Sola, igitur, catholica ecclesia est, quæ verum cultum retinet. Hic est fons veritatis; hoc est domicilium fidei; hoc templum Dei; quo, si quis non intraverit, vel a quo, si quis exiverit, a spectatæ et salutis æternæ alienus est. Inst. Lib. iii. c. 30.—See also St. Chrysostom, Hom. 2ad, in Ep. ad Ephes. and passim.—St. Austin, de Unit.*

Eccl.—St. Optatus, Mil. Lib. 1mo.—St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Cent. 15.—Or rather, consult any of those venerable writers, who make mention of the church. Among them there is not one—not a solitary individual—who making mention of it, does not teach, that it is essentially one,—one in the unity of its faith, and one in the unity of its external communion. This circumstance was so universally admitted, in the fourth century, that in the year 395, under the emperors Arcadius and Honorius, a general law was passed, declaring all those heretics, who did not profess the catholic religion. “*Hereticorum vocabulo continentur, et latis adversus eos sanctionibus debent succumbere, qui vel levi argumento, a judicio catholicæ religionis et tramite detecti fuerint deviare.*”

It would indeed,—such is the evidence of the necessity of the unity of the church—it would be just as easy to produce quotations, in acknowledgment of this necessity, from protestant, as it is from catholic writers. The first apostles of the reformation—Luther, Melancthon, Beza, &c.—all admitted it; and the most enlightened portion of the clergy, that have, at any period, since the introduction of protestantism, adorned this nation—the Montagues, Pearsons, Thorndykes, Taylors—have borne eloquent testimony of its certainty. In reality, the instinct of reason suggests it. *Truth is one, therefore the church is one.* The reason why

each one believes, that his own church is the "right one," is because he believes, that his own church is the only true one. It were folly to imagine, that any man can be so absurd as to suppose, that his own church is the "right one," and that the church, which differs from it, can be "a right," or a true one also. That were supposing, that truth and falsehood were both right, or both true. But the case is, whoever believes in any church, necessarily believes,---if only he reason at all upon the subject---that all the churches, which dissent from that church, are false churches---spurious establishments erected by the hands of passion. And hence, exclusive doctrines are the dictate of common sense, and the received opinion of nearly every sect that pretends to venerate christianity.

(E) PAGE 12.

On the supremacy of St Peter.

If there be any passages in the holy scriptures, which it would seem almost impossible for ignorance to misunderstand, or for simplicity to mistake---any passages, which prejudice could not misinterpret, nor sophistry distort;---if there be any

passages, which to the protestant, explaining them by the protestant rule, should appear clear, easy, and perspicuous, which need neither glossary nor annotation—to my ideas, they are those, which establish the super-eminence of St. Peter over the rest of his fellow apostles. Considering the context of these passages, the peculiarity of language, which expresses them, and the peculiarity of circumstances which they relate, their meaning to my feelings of common sense (and it is to such only that I wish to appeal in this note) their meaning appears so obvious, that I wonder how even prejudice or passion can contrive to misconceive them. Indeed, blind as are prejudice and passion, I do believe, that if it were not also their interest to misconceive them, their misconception would be rare.

Appealing then, to the mere context and language of these passages, without any other commentary, but what instantly presents itself to the understanding, behold the texts to which I mean to allude. I might appeal to several; but I will select only two—the promise which Christ made to Peter of the supremacy, and the completion of the promise—the former contained in the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew; the latter, in the twenty-first of St. John.

In the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew, from the 13th to the 20th verse, it is related, that Jesus

having interrogated his disciples respecting their faith in his person, Peter instantly answered by a strong attestation, that he believed him to be the Messiah, and the Son of God; *"thou art Christ,"* he said, *"the son of the living God."* Jesus praising the fervor of his faith, and designing, doubtlessly, to reward it, replied, *"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona and I say to thee, that thou art Peter (that is a rock) and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, shall be bound, also, in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed, also, in heaven."*

Sophistry, and even learning apart,—it is here evident, in the first place, that the words of Jesus are, immediately, addressed to Peter. "I say," to thee, *"thou art Peter; whatsoever thou shalt bind, &c."*—All this is personal; not another apostle is named, not another alluded to. To remove even the suspicion, which any might conceive, that what he said was not personal, Jesus calls the individual, to whom he speaks, by his name;—*Simon*, he says. He even does more; for, as there was another Simon in the company—Simon the brother of Thaddæus—in order, evidently, to obviate the difficulty, which the ingenuity of prejudice, or the subtlety of error might possibly cull from this cir-

cumstance, he distinguishes the Simon to whom he addresses himself, from the Simon who is the brother of Thaddæus;—he names him Simon son of Jonas.—Next, the *motive* of this nice attention to distinguish Peter from the rest of his associates is as obvious as the distinction itself. Peter had distinguished himself from them, by the peculiar readiness of his faith, and the energy with which he professed it. The *motive* of Jesus was to reward them, and to render more conspicuous and incontestible, the peculiar dignity which he was proceeding to confer upon him. But it is in conferring this dignity, and in pointing out the nature of it—as it was in pointing out the person, on whom he designed to bestow it—that the conduct of Jesus is again manifest and striking. The name of Peter, until this occasion, had been *Simon*. Jesus changed this, as I remarked, into *Peter*, which signifies *a rock*, adding, immediately, as a reason, “because *upon this rock* I will build my church.” Now, whence a new name, if Simon were not intended to have been, personally, pointed out? And whence such a name, if he were not designed to be, personally, distinguished from his brethren? Jesus says, too, *upon this rock*. And why should he say *this rock*, and not merely a rock, if Peter were not destined to be a foundation distinct, in some respect or other, from the rest of his fellow labourers? Certainly, just as the strong

emblem—a *rock*—is calculated to express the stability of the church, so the demonstrative—“*this*”—is, with equal accuracy, formed to point out either the individual or the spot, upon which the sacred fabric is destined to repose. Thus, having distinctly indicated the person of Peter, praised his faith, and constituted him the mysterious basis of his church, he proceeds, without any interruption of his discourse—still addressing himself to Peter—to confer upon him the attributes of magistracy and authority, of which the keys are considered the usual symbols, and the power of binding and losing the usual appendages.

When, by the protestant rule of interpretation, the literal meaning or acceptation of any text is clear, or not combated by any other text, that is clearer, or equally clear, with itself—in such case, the rule declares that the literal meaning or acceptation should be adopted. Now, setting aside the artifices of conventions, and the prejudices of education—supposing any individual, not yet influenced by the passions and interests of party, were to read the promises made to Peter, and to interpret them by their obvious import, that is, by the above rule of interpretation—what is the meaning which his reason would naturally affix to them? Certainly, in the first place, that they allude to Peter, because they are addressed to Peter; secondly, that they insure something to

Peter, which they do not insure to the rest of the apostles, because Peter alone is named—no other being even alluded to. Else, he must suppose, that Christ speaks to Peter, and does not mean Peter; and that when he promises something, individually, to Peter, by a mental reservation, he intends to bestow it upon all! Is not such supposition absurd?—Yes; it is supposing, that Jesus spoke preposterously—it is taking from language its ordinary signification, and is the grossest violation of the rule which I have just laid down. Hence, among the fathers and ancient writers of the church, there is not one, who giving the literal and proper interpretation of the passage, does not explain it as referring to Peter only, and to his supremacy. See Origen, Hom. 5, in Exod.—St. Cyprian, de Disciplinâ et Hab. Virg. Ep. 55, 70, 71, &c.—St. Athanasius, in Ep. ad Fel.—St. Jerom, passim.—St. Gregory Naz. de Moderatione Servanda in disp.—St. Chrysostom, Hom. 55, in Mat. &c.—St. Cyril Alex. L. 2, in Joan. &c. —Theophilactus, in cap. 2 Lucae.—St. Ambrose, L. 6 Luc.—St. Austin, serm. 201, 203, &c. But why enumerate a long catalogue of names? I have observed, that the writers of every remote period are united in the same interpretation. The fact is—and whoever will peruse the passage with candor and discernment, will own it—the interpretation which they have followed, and which I have

given, is alone plain, easy, natural, and obvious;—every other is confused, forced, distorted, and unnatural.

But, to come to the fulfilment of the promise.—We read, in the twenty-first chapter of St. John, that before his ascension, Jesus appeared to his disciples, at the lake of Tiberias: he conversed with them, was present at their repast, and, after they had completed it, addressed himself in this very singular manner, to St. Peter. “*Simon, Son of John, dost thou love me more than these? Simon answered, yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee—and Jesus said, Feed my Lambs.*”

“*Again, Jesus said to him, Simon son of John dost thou love me?—Simon answered, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus again repeated, Feed my lambs.*”

A third time, Jesus asked him. *Simon, son of John, dost thou love me?* Here, the apostle was afflicted, apprehensive, probably, either that Jesus doubted of his sincerity, or trembling, perhaps, at the recollection of his former presumption, which had been the prelude to his fall, he modestly replied, “*Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.*”—Here Jesus added, “*Feed my sheep.*”

The above passage is, certainly, one of those whose every feature is remarkable, and intended, evidently, to convey the impression of some effect

more striking even than the generality of our Saviour's conversations with his apostles. Behold, what common sense suggests, as its most apposite signification. It is evident, in the first place, as it was on the occasion of the promise in St. Matthew, that Jesus here again, immediately, and personally points out the individual, to whom he addresses his discourse. *Simon*, he says; and to prevent the possibility of conceiving, that he might, perhaps, mean Simon the brother of Thaddæus, he adds, *Simon son of John*. It is, consequently, plain, that he does not here intend to address himself to all his apostles. This, also, is plain from Peter's answers; for, just as the questions were put to Peter only, so Peter only answers them in his own name.—Jesus, then, asks Peter, whether he loved him—or rather, not whether he loved him, but whether he loved him more than the rest of the apostles who were present: “*Lovest thou me more than these?*” Now, whence so singular an interrogation—whence this demand of a love superior to that of the other apostles—unless that the nature of the office or dignity which he was going to confer upon him, was of a nature also superior to theirs? Ingenuity can conceive no other cause for such difference of love, but such difference of office, or such super-eminence of dignity. And then too, he three times puts to him the question, if he love him? Why so

singular a question—for Jesus already knew, as Peter remarks, the sincerity of his love?—And above all, why so singularly repeated—for nothing similar occurs, in the whole series of the sacred text? Without doubt, as the whole conduct of Jesus is here uncommon, it could not be designed to express merely the common commission to teach and reform the world. But, observe now the answers of Jesus. In reply to the two first assurances of Peter, that he loved him, he said, on each occasion, “*Feed my lambs.*” After the third assurance, he added, “*Feed my sheep.*” In the holy scriptures, the faithful are, frequently, designated under the figure and appellation of a flock. Jesus employs this figure, on this occasion; but he divides the flock into two distinct and separate parts—into *lambs*, by which he means the ordinary faithful—and *sheep*, by which he means the pastors of the faithful; for just as the lamb is nourished by the sheep, or its dam, so are the faithful fed by their pastors with the word of God. Now, Jesus confers upon Peter the care and superintendence over both these parts, *feed my lambs*; *feed my sheep*.—That there is really question in the words “*feed my lambs,*” of care or superintendence over the faithful, this is a circumstance not even contested by our protestant adversaries. They all allow, that they are synonymous to the order *govern my faithful*; *watch over the church*.

Therefore, admitting that there is any meaning in the distinction which Jesus makes between the two portions of his fold, it evidently follows, that, as by the words *feed my lambs*, he gives Peter a commission to govern the faithful, by the terms *feed my sheep*, he gives him a jurisdiction over the pastors of the faithful. Whoever rejects this distinction, makes Jesus speak unintelligibly; and whoever rejects this interpretation of the distinction, takes away from analogy its obvious bearings, and from words their natural import. Christ compares his church to a flock,—he divides the flock into two parts,—and he gives Peter the superintendence over the whole, *feed my lambs, feed my sheep*. The consequence is, that since he gave Peter a superintendence over his whole flock, he confers upon him a jurisdiction distinct from that of the rest of the apostles—a jurisdiction more enlarged than theirs—a jurisdiction reaching over the whole body of the church, over the taught and the teachers, over the governed and the governors.

When I spoke of the promise which is made to Peter, in St. Matthew, I remarked, that the interpretation which I then gave, is that of all the great christian writers of every age, till the æra of the reformation; I here repeat the same remark, in regard of the texts, which I have cited from St. John. These writers unanimously refer them to Peter, and expound them, as the proof of his

supremacy. They all teach—to use the words of St. Ambrose—that “*Christ established Peter his vicar, upon earth. He preferred him alone, among all, because among all, he alone professed his love.*” In cap. ult. Luc. But let learning consult any of the ancient fathers:—Chrysostom, in Evang. Joan. Hom. 87—Epiphanius, in Anac.—Theophilactus, in cap. ult. Joan.—Origen, in cap. 6, Ep. ad Rom.—St. Gregory, Lib. 5, Ep. ad Marit. &c. &c. &c. The whole Greek church, till the period of its schism, always acknowledged and acted upon these principles; and the whole Latin church, at every period, down to the present day, has ever considered them as the strong basis of its unity, order, and subordination. Indeed, I could almost venture to appeal to the testimony of the common prayer-book, to sanction the above interpretation of Peter’s supremacy. In the collect, which is read on the festival of the saint, it is said, O Almighty God, who, by thy son Jesus Christ, didst give to thy apostle St. Peter many excellent gifts, and commandest him, earnestly, *to feed thy flock*, make we beseech thee, &c.—In this prayer, the power of Peter is made to rest upon the words, *feed my lambs, feed my sheep*; “as being particularly commissioned, the learned protestant author of the *Essay upon Catholic Communion* observes, to feed the *whole flock* of Christ.”

I shall omit the various texts and passages of the

holy scriptures, which either confirm these interpretations, or form strong presumptions of their evidence. But, whoever, considering the conduct and peculiar features of the apostles, will compare them attentively together, will find, that there are circumstances in the conduct of Peter, and traits in his features, which distinguish him, very forcibly, from the rest of his fellow labourers. He is the first who is charged by his divine master to confirm the brethren in the faith—the first, who received the revelation to admit the Gentiles into the church—the first, who preaches the gospel to them—the first, who spoke in the assembly of disciples—the first, who pronounces the decision respecting the legal observances—the first, in all the functions of the apostolic college—the first named, in all the enumerations which the scripture makes of the apostles, although he is neither the first in age among them, nor the first called to the apostolic functions. Surely, some peculiar characteristic must have been the cause of all these peculiar distinctions. And, what cause so obviously plain, as that to which I have attributed them? At all events, this I am convinced of—amid all the variety of passages, upon which error, or prejudice, or fanaticism have laid the foundations of heresy, there is not one which admits so clear, so consistent, so satisfactory an interpretation, as that which I have given of the texts of SS. John and

Matthew. If there were one, with what an air of triumph, and with what real triumph, would the eloquence and learning of its defenders press it upon the observation and understandings of their adversaries? But the misfortune is,—while it is the interest of some to shut their eyes to the blaze of truth, it is natural also for passion and prejudice to turn aside from its contemplation. And it is, perhaps, as natural to do it, upon the subject of St. Peter's dignity, as almost upon any other controverted question. For, if Peter were, really, the head of the apostles—if he were, really, invested with a peculiar office, two consequences are obvious—first, *that the headship and office were destined to be permanent*—secondly, *that their permanency has continued in the succession of the Roman Pontiffs*. The proof of Peter's supremacy is the proof of the supremacy of Pius the seventh.

(F) PAGE 13.

The opinions of Melancthon, Grotius, and Leibnitz on the necessity of authority, and above all, the necessity of the papal authority.

MELANCTHON, in one of the articles, which he presents to Francis the first, says, “Primum igitur, hoc omnes profiteamur, politiam ecclesiasticam

rem esse sanctam et utilem; ut sint utique aliqui episcopi, qui præsint pluribus ecclesiarum ministris; item, ut Romanus Pontifex præsint omnibus episcopis. Opus est enim in ecclesiâ gubernatoribus, qui vocatos ad ministeria ecclesiastica explorent et ordinent et inspiciant doctrinam sacerdotum; et si nulli essent episcopi, tamen creari tales oporteret.” Art. 1. apud D’Argentri Coll. Jud. part 2, I. 1. Hence, at the diet of Smalkald, he offered to acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope over the protestant churches, provided he (the Pope) would not oppose the preaching of the new gospel. Luther, it is true, reproached his inconsistency of owning the Pope to be his superior, whom he had publicly derided, and preached up as Antichrist.

The opinion of Grotius respecting the necessity of authority to keep together the bands of unity, if not more forcibly, is more elegantly expressed, than that of Melancthon. “Restitutionem Christianorum in unum idemque corpus,” says the learned and candid writer, “semper optatum a Grotio, sciunt, qui eum norunt. Postea, vidit id plane fieri nequire, quia præterquam quod Calvinistarum ingenia ferme omnium ab omni pace sunt alienissima, protestantes, nullo inter se communi ecclesiastico regimine, sociantur. Quæ causæ sunt, cur factæ partes in unum protestantium corpus colligi nequeant; imo, et cur partes aliæ

atque aliæ sint exsurrecturæ." Quare, nunc, planè ita sentit Grotius, *et multi cum ipso*, non posse protestantes inter se conjungi, nisi simul jungantur cum iis, qui sedi Romanæ cohaereant. Sine quâ, nihil sperari potest in ecclesiâ commune regimen. Ideo optat, ut ea divulsio, quæ evenit, et causæ divulsionis tollantur. Inter eas causas, non est primatus Episcopi Romani secundum canones, faciente Melanchthone, qui eum primatum etiam necessarium putat ad retinendam unitatem. Neque enim hoc est ecclesiam subicere pontificis libidini, sed reponere ordinem sapienter institutum." Grot. Riv. apol. Disc. Tom. 4. See also, Consult. Casandri apud Grot. Tom. 4.—In animad. Rivet. Tom. 4, &c. &c.

Similar to the above opinions of Melancthon and Grotius, was that also of another very distinguished character, in the republic of letters, Leibnitz—a protestant and a candid man. He expresses himself nearly in the same terms as Grotius; considers the reunion with the mother church, as the only source of unity, and as the only means of giving back tranquility to society; and he piously offers up the same vows for that happy end. See his works, passim.

(G) PAGE 14.

On the spiritual supremacy of princes.

WHILST interest is one of the great springs of action, it is no wonder that there should be always found men to defend the crimes of princes, or to support the errors of religious institutions. Let what may be the magnitude of the former, you trace, at every period of history, a legion of parasitical protectors, who come forward to uphold them; and whatever be the absurdities of the latter, you find always a host of advocates rise up to vindicate them. It is by this principle only, that we can account for the circumstances which took place during the reign of the eighth Henry. He was a tyrant covered with crimes, arrogating to himself a new form of authority, and upon the ruins of an edifice, which had subsisted in the island eight hundred years, raising a new fabric, planned and constructed by the dictates of his own caprice. His crimes found supporters, though all abhorred them; his new constitution, defenders, though the whole nation considered it as an impious act of tyranny.

In the acknowledgment, however, which is made in this country, that a spiritual authority is

necessary in the church, as a civil one is essential in the state, there is something for wisdom to applaud. It is admitting the same principle, which forms the basis of catholic union. It is owning, the palpable truth, that to preserve the unity of faith, the regularity of subordination and the sanctity of discipline—the stays of power and the influences of jurisdiction are required. Of course, the men, who first defended the spiritual usurpations of Henry, or those, who have since defended the supremacy which reposes upon his usurpations, have this to say in their own vindication,—that they have defended a right principle, and supported a maxim which religion approves and sanctions.—Their error is only that they apply them ill. They apply them, not where religion bids, but where policy commands—not where reason itself points out, but where the wisdom of self-interest directs. They may, too, have this slender claim to praise, that, supposing—which is the fact—that they have applied the maxim ill, they have applied it, where after its right application, it is perhaps, *the least ill*, applied; and where, though absurdly defended, it is, *least absurdly*, defended.

After I have paid these trifling tributes of praise to the good sense of this nation, I know nothing, that in its conduct, or opinion, respecting the spiritual supremacy, is deserving of admiration or applause. The history of the introduction of our

supremacy, is not, certainly, any strong recommendation or attestation of its divinity. The cause and occasion of it are known to whoever is but slenderly acquainted with our history. They were lust inflamed to fury, and the fury of lust determined upon gratification; they were anger stimulated to resentment, and resentment assisted by all the aids of tyranny, bent upon revenge. “*Violently hurried away,*” says Heylin, “*by some private affections, and finding that the Pope appeared the greatest obstacle to his desires, he extinguished his authority in the realm.*” That, indeed, it was not the dictate of principle, or the suggestion even of human policy, that induced him to arrogate to himself the spiritual supremacy, is plain from this circumstance, that before he extinguished the authority of the Pope, he employed every expedient, which art, or the influences of power and riches, could supply, in order to obtain a canonical separation from his consort.—At the bottom, Henry possessed a strong veneration for his religion. But as his passions were stronger than his virtue, he sacrificed, in the conflict between them, his veneration for his religion to the pleasure of their indulgence. The Pope, as Heylin observes, was the chief obstacle to this indulgence, and therefore boldly spurning the odious hindrance, he rejected his authority; and indignant also, at the method with which his holiness had treated him, he, with

still greater boldness, arrogated the spiritual authority, and established himself the supreme head of the church of England, declaring, that, "*all jurisdiction, as well spiritual, as civil, proceeds from the royal power, as from its first source.*"

Tyrants, or princes, I have remarked, find always slaves and flatterers, because they possess the means of rewarding submission. Accordingly, the parliament soon sanctioned the unholy usurpation. By an act passed in the year 1534, they conferred upon Henry, and transferred to his successors—no matter whether these were men, women, or children—the title, power, and prerogatives of the supreme head of the English church. The act runs thus, "*Albeit the king is supreme head of the church of England, and has been so recognized by the clergy of this realm, in their convocation.*" (The members of the clergy here alluded to were a few creatures awed, some of them by fear, and others bought over to sanction the dirty business.)—"Yet, for more corroboration thereof, as also for extirpating errors, heresies, and abuses of the same, be it enacted, that the king, his heirs and successors, kings of England, be accepted and reputed supreme heads, on earth, of the church of England, and have and enjoy united and annexed to the imperial crown of this realm, as well the title and style thereof, as all honours, dignities, pre-eminences, jurisdictions, privileges, authorities, immunities, profits, and commodities to the said

dignity of supreme head of the same church belonging or appertaining. And that our said Lord, his heirs and successors, kings of this realm, shall have full power and authority, from time to time, to visit and repress, redress, reform, order, correct, restrain, and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, offences, contempts, and enormities whatsoever they be, which, by any manner of spiritual authority, or jurisdiction ought, or may lawfully be reformed, repressed, ordered, redressed, corrected, restrained, or amended, most to the pleasure of Almighty God, the increase of virtue in Christ's religion, and the conservation of peace, unity, and tranquility of the realm." Such is the history of the origin of the supremacy of our monarch—such the history of the establishment of that jurisdiction which constitutes the platform, upon which the fabric of protestantism reposes in this nation.

I know, indeed, that it is denied, that the above act constitutes, at the present period, the platform of the establishment. Such is, evidently, its extravagance, it required all the boldness of such a character as was Henry's, to propose it, and all the obsequiousness of such a parliament, as was his, to sanction it, as a law. Hence, has the modesty of several succeeding princes, or the wisdom of several succeeding parliaments—not willing that the religion of the state should rest upon an act of despotism—thought proper to substitute other acts in its

room : and the supremacy, it is now said, is bottomed upon something much wiser, and more temperate, than the preceding statutes.—I commend the modesty, which blushes at the origin of the protestant supremacy: there is, certainly, much for modesty to be ashamed of. However, after all, let only candor consider seriously the acts, which the supposed wisdom or temperance of succeeding princes or parliaments have substituted in the room of Henry's statutes, and, I contend, it will still discover that the despotism of Henry and the acts, which I have cited, are still the real, though not the nominal platform of the establishment.—It will discover, that all the subsequent acts or statutes of our parliaments, which either confer, sanction, or regulate the supremacy, are still only trifling modifications of the acts and statutes of Henry—modifications of its stile, not of its principles; of its phrases, not of its substance.

Notwithstanding every modification, it is still true, that whoever is seated upon the throne of this empire—be it man, woman, or child—unbeliever or atheist—the most vicious or the most stupid of mankind—is, by its laws, the supreme head of its church,—his authority is the sole source of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and his sanction the sole principle of canonical institution. Notwithstanding every modification, it is still true, that the word only of the prince gives validity to the exercise of every

species of spiritual function, as his prohibition renders them invalid---true, that neither the administration of the sacraments, neither the office of preaching, neither the use of censures, neither any code of faith, nor any form of liturgy are valid without the approbation and sanction of his supremacy. It is this supremacy precisely, which gives effect or nullity to every act of the sacred ministry. Hence, is his spiritual power far superior to that of his bishops, or archbishops; because it is he, who confers upon these the power of performing their spiritual functions; he is the arbiter over their spiritual functions; and he gives validity to their spiritual functions. Theirs is the subordinate, *his* the supreme authority---theirs is the stream, *his* the fountain. “*It appears,*” says Neal, “*that all the jurisdiction and authority claimed by the pope, as head of the church, is transferred and annexed to the imperial crown of these realms.*” “*And when any part of the church,*” adds Hooker, “*is infected with errors, schism, heresies, &c. whatever spiritual powers the legates had from the see of Rome, as much, in every degree, have our laws fully granted to the king, forever.*” (Eccl. Pol.)

Accordingly, if we examine, how far our princes have acted up to their supremacy, we find, that many of them have carried the exercise of their sacred functions, through all their bearings, to their utmost boundaries. Henry appointed a certain

number of commissioners to draw up, *in his name*, an explanation of the creed, the sacraments and the ten commandments. He also established several articles of faith, which he made it heresy to disbelieve, and death to call in question.—The child Edward did as much. Ascending the throne, in 1547, he obliged all bishops to take out from him new commissions to perform their spiritual functions. He introduced the use of communion under both species; declared the practice of confession voluntary; changed the liturgy and the public offices of the church; sanctioned the marriage of the clergy; published a new confession of faith, which by a royal mandate of his supremacy, rendered it now heresy to believe, what, by a similar royal mandate, it was, a few years before, heresy to disbelieve. Under the *woman* Elizabeth, we trace—singular as it ought to appear to christian piety enlightened by christian wisdom—we trace the same spiritual supremacy claimed, sanctioned and enforced—and enforced, to nearly the same extent, as it was by the preceding princes. In 1559, a law was passed proclaiming her right to reform all errors and abuses in the church, and declaring, that no one was capacitated to perform any public function, or to exercise any public office, who refused to swear, that he acknowledged her the supreme head of the state, in spirituals, as well as temporal. Acting up to this supreme headship in spirituals, she reformed the

religion of Edward, as he had reformed that of Henry; she formed a new code of faith, changed the liturgy, ordained new ceremonies, deposed and created bishops; issued communications, &c. &c. Neither have Elizabeth and her two protestant predecessors, alone, performed these holy functions, their successors also, at different periods, have, though with considerable shades of difference, imitated their example, and exerted their spiritual prerogatives. Indeed, the case is extremely plain.—By the laws and religious maxims of this country, the prince is just as much, in the eyes of the English-protestant—the protestant pope, as the bishop of Rome is, in the eyes of the catholic, the catholic pope. Both in the eyes of each, are in each establishment, the supreme and spiritual heads, the sources of jurisdiction, the centres of unity, the common spiritual fathers of the faithful, and of the pastors of the faithful.

It is not the object of this note to attempt to point out the error of imagining, that temporal princes are also the spiritual rulers of the church. It was reserved to the epoch of the reformation, and almost solely to the English reformers, to suggest and establish so strange a system. There is, in reality, nothing in the nature of religion to give it an air of probability—nothing in antiquity to sanction it—nothing even in more modern precedent to render it decent. In this, the whole body of foreign re-

formers, but most pointedly the presbyterian sects, agree with the Roman catholic. "*Church matters,*" the learned presbyterian Cartwright remarks, "*ought to be handled by church officers. The principal direction of them is by God's ordinance, committed to the ministers of the church and to the ecclesiastical governors. As these meddle not with making civil laws, so the civil magistrate ought not to ordain ceremonies, or determine controversies in the church, as long as they do not trench upon his temporal authority.*" (Admonition to parl.) Doubtless, as the nature, the end and object of civil power are different from those of spiritual power, and as their duties, offices, and functions are also distinct, so should there be a difference and distinction in their respective ministers. It is the prince's—all the ancient writers upon the subject of these two powers have observed—to rule the state, the pontiff's to rule the church; the prince's to wield the sword, the pontiff's to hold the crozier; the prince's to watch over the duties of the citizen, the pontiff's to direct the faith and conscience of the christian. "*God,*" said Osius to Constance, "*gave the empire and the sceptre to you, but the church and the altar to the priesthood.*"

But it is a circumstance, which merits the attention of curiosity to remark, how appositely the assumption of the spiritual supremacy served the

purpose for which it was professed to have been adopted.—The observation, too, of this circumstance, while it may amuse curiosity, will present also a forcible presumption, if not a forcible proof, that the assumption of the supremacy by our princes was not the dictate of divine institution, nor even the result of political wisdom.—The purpose for which the spiritual supremacy of our princes was professed to have been assumed and sanctioned was “to support the unity of faith and the integrity of christian discipline.” This is the motive which is cited in the acts, and preambles of the acts, which confer the important prerogative. Well! and observe how this is realized. At the period shortly preceding the arrogation of the supremacy by Henry, the whole nation—each reader knows it—was united in the profession of the same faith, in the observance of the same practices, and in obedience to the same authority. There was neither division nor schism, nor heresy, within its precincts. Behold, Henry assumes the supremacy, and straight, a schism is the result. The schism generates heresy; and in the trifling interval of a few years, a nation, which had always been distinguished for the steadiness of its faith, as it is remarkable for the general steadiness of its good sense, became the sport of error, the play-thing of illusion, and the dupe of every dogmatising fanatic, whom fancy, or folly, or interest, or ignorance, prompted to be-

come apostles. Each bigot became a preacher, or a prophet. New establishments rose daily upon the ruins of the ancient altars; and it happened, not unfrequently, that a multitude of distinct families composed a multitude of distinct religions. To stay this prolific growth of error, which often disturbed the peace of the nation, and threatened, sometimes, the security of the throne, several codes of faith were published, dictated by the supreme head of the new church, sanctioned by all the authority of his spiritual influences, and by royal mandates pressed forcibly upon the piety, or the credulity of the people. It mattered not. The people not yet tutored to believe, or not yet sufficiently enlightened to conceive, that the prince is the arbiter of the nation's faith, and that the mandates of his will are the dictate of the divine authority, considered them as the undue exertions of his prerogative. Not the ardor or eloquence of a considerable portion of the clergy, who were interested in their defence, could induce them to believe them—nor, indeed, could even interest, in many instances, induce many, in the clergy themselves, to respect them. Spite of royal mandates, of royal canons, and royal censures, error in every varied, versatile, and frightful form, continued to erect new temples, and the nation presented to the astonished world, a scene of folly, bigotry, and superstition, striking and preposterous

as any that curiosity can trace in the lengthened annals of fanaticism. Its inconstancy became proverbial. It was compared, by other countries, to the never ceasing motion and fluctuation of the waves that wash our shores.—Such are the effects which resulted from the arrogation of a spiritual supremacy by our temporal potentates—such the consequences of pretending to support unity of belief, by means which revelation has not sanctioned. The truth is, there is but one real band of unity. Break that asunder, and disunity will prevail.—There is but one established principle of subordination. Reject that, and disorder will wanton in licentiousness. Not the mariner without a helm, a compass, or an anchor, is more completely the sport of the waves and tempests, than the mind without this principle. Without this principle, each one, like *Palinurus*, might call out

Nunc me pontus habet, jactantque in littore venti.

(H) PAGE 17.

On the differences of opinion and discipline in the catholic church.

THE circumstances and objects, which the protestant often brings forward, as proofs of disunity in the catholic church, are the differences of opinion which prevail among its theologians, and the varieties of discipline, which in various nations, subsist among its members. These objections may be found incessantly repeated by almost every intrepid writer, who either combats the divinity of popery, or attempts to prove the divinity of protestantism.

Among our theologians, it is said, and in our schools, there prevails a great difference and opposition of opinion.—True, we allow it. But then, what are the questions and objects, about which this difference and opposition reign? Why, about questions and objects that are, sometimes, of very little importance; sometimes, of no importance whatever; sometimes, even ludicrously unimportant. They are about questions, which do not regard the basis of faith, and which the voice

and authority of the church have left entirely undecided. They are about questions, which do not form any articles of faith, and about which, of course, the church allows perfect liberty of opinion to her members—allows them to believe or disbelieve them, to discuss and interpret them precisely as they please. But in this case, there is obviously no violation of unity, because there is no violation of faith; there is no violation of union, because there is no violation of authority. There is even no difference of faith, because the objects, about which the differences subsist, are not objects of faith. It is thus in civil governments: there exist, respecting various points of law, policy, and jurisprudence, the widest differences of opinion. And yet, these differences are neither considered as divisions of the unity of the government, nor as breaches of subordination. The reason is, either they are deemed too unimportant to merit the interference of the government; or, if important, its wisdom not having determined them as the maxims or basis of its stability, permits its subjects to think, speak, or write respecting them, as they please. In governments, what constitutes the breach of civil unity is rebellion. In the church, what constitutes the breach of religious unity is the same—the refusal of submission to her authority, when she ordains it.

In regard of the varieties of discipline which prevail in the catholic church, the answer which is made to the objections arising from them, is perhaps even more obvious than the above. Not only are these varieties of discipline not repugnant to the unity of religion, or opposed to its maxims or its essence—not only are they not censured, or only tolerated, they are considered by her as important appendages of the divine worship, and the dictates of wisdom, piety, and devotion. They are approved and sanctioned by her authority. The fact is this; the dispositions, the features, and the wants of different nations are various—therefore should the forms of discipline which regulate them be various likewise. Manners and times are for ever found to alter—therefore, should those practices alter also which had been, hitherto, accommodated to those objects. Such are the differences of character, in different countries, and such the difference of circumstances, at different periods, that what would be wise and prudent in one country, would often be foolish and pernicious in another; what, at one period would be necessary, at another would be preposterous. Hence the church piously attentive to the situation of her children, and mildly indulgent to their wants,—measuring her laws by the dictates of discretion, not only permits, but approves every variety of discipline,

which she feels may contribute to the propagation of virtue, and to the support of devotion. She accommodates the peculiarities of her discipline to the peculiarities of nations, times, circumstances, and necessities. But in this, as in the differences in the schools, there is neither any infringement of the unity of her faith, nor any violation of the union of her government; there is no more violation of either, than there is a violation of the unity of the civil laws, or civil government, where there prevails in different provinces and different cities, a variety of customs, manners, practices, and fashions. These do not lacerate, nor injure the unity of either. In short, just as I remarked before—as nothing destroys unity in the state but rebellion, so nothing destroys it in the church, but the refusal of submission to her authority.

(I) PAGE 25.

Innovation in faith impossible in the catholic church.

IF there were no other barriers to innovation in our faith but the nature of the evidences which attest it, and the nature of the means by which it is attested, these alone should suffice to convince wis-

dom of the impossibility of such an accident. The evidences of our faith, and the mediums through which we receive these evidences, are the testimony of *general and particular councils*—assemblies consisting of the most virtuous and enlightened pastors of the christian universe, piously in each age, convened to watch over the sacred depositum of revelation, to ascertain its dictates, to compare their own belief with that of preceding periods, to regulate their decisions by this comparison, and to transmit their decisions, thus regulated, to succeeding centuries:—they are *the general voice of our pastors*, not now convened in councils, but dispersed throughout their dioceses, inculcating to their flocks what the councils had decided:—they are *the instructions of our sovereign pontiffs*, pointing out to the faithful an object of discipline or belief, in an address, which is either formally received, or tacitly admitted by the great body of the pastors of the church:—they are the *uniform doctrines* of the schools, of the pulpit, and of books:—they are the regulations of *our public liturgies*, the modes of our public practices, the forms of our public prayers:—they are—but to suppose that even this is not enough to stay innovation, or at least to suppose that this is not enough to trace the period of its intrusion, and the nature of its mischief, were certainly to suppose what, in the ordinary course of things, is obviously impossible. The former supposition implies the ne-

cessity of believing, that a multitude of different nations, where catholicity is general—the bishops and the clergy, the theologians, preachers, writers, and instructors—must have conspired among themselves, and with the supreme pontiff, to alter the holy code of revelation.—The second includes the necessity of believing, that a general revolution must have taken place in the christian world, changing the opinions of the faithful, altering their customs, habits, and pursuits, and either, that none had observed it, or that none had opposed it, or that none had the curiosity to inform us of the growing evil.

But, it is upon motives more forcible even than the above, that wisdom may be convinced, that no innovation, no creation of new articles of faith, can possibly be intruded upon catholic credulity. It is the leading maxim of our religion, that revelation was communicated entire, perfect and complete, to the apostles, containing every truth, and comprising every tenet, which piety should adore. Consequently, as we do not admit any new revelation, we cannot admit any new article of belief: as we do not admit, that the number of truths, first revealed to the apostles, has, since that period, been augmented, we, consequently, cannot admit that any new truth can be imposed upon our reason. We believe, that the substance of faith can neither increase, diminish, nor be altered.

But, here is the circumstance, which, on this important subject, has often given occasion to the reproaches of ignorance, and to the cavils of prejudice.—The pride of imaginary learning, it is well known, the licentiousness of passion, and the restlessness of the fancy have often combated, and for ever combat, the divine truths of revelation.—Indeed, even the simplicity of ignorance, the timidity of sincerity, or the feelings of enlightened piety, have been occasionally perplexed about the import or meaning of some point of faith, and the nature or bearing of some duty. On these occasions, the church has often interfered, and when she interfered, has always issued her decisions on the point in contest. It is these decisions, which as they were “new,” our adversaries, very wisely, denominated “new articles of faith.”

As for the mere interference of the church on these occasions, that, surely, cannot need the aid of dissertation to justify it. If she be the guardian of truth, or the guardian of the faithful, seeing the former assailed, it is her duty to defend it, and seeing the latter exposed to danger—some of them, perhaps, seduced, and others perplexed,—it is equally her duty to come forward to their protection and instruction. The duty of her interference, on these occasions, is evidently urgent; and so also is the mode of her interference evidently wise, and calculated to prevent the possibility of innovation.

---I will suppose, then, one of the cases, when truth is combated by the artifices of sophistry, or the arts of passion. What is the mode in which the church interferes to prevent their mischief?---Ascending the tribunal of her authority, she calls before it the disturbers of the public harmony, interrogates the nature of their contest, hears their difficulties and their defence, and comparing these with the dictates of the law, she explains the contested article, fixes its signification, and points out in what consists, or where is concealed, the error that combats its divinity;---then, in order to stay the growth of error, she issues her decisions, instructing the faithful, that such doctrine has been revealed, and that such is its genuine interpretation. This is the process, which in every contest respecting faith, the church, either in her councils or by the authority of her pastors, uniformly follows. But, on these occasions, although she issues new decrees, she adds nothing to the depositum of faith, nothing to its substance, or to the number of its truths. She merely asserts, that such doctrine was revealed to the apostles, and she explains it---giving to her explanation, in consequence of the growth of heresy and the sophistries of error, a clearness and accuracy, which the contested article, while uncontested, did not stand in need of. This is a mere enlargement of interpretation, not an enlargement of faith; or, if you please, a

more explicit profession of what was before implicitly believed. Saint Vincent of Lerins, compares this circumstance to what takes place in the human body: "*the body*," he says, "*grows and expands, yet the body is the same.*"

But, it is the rules and maxims, which the church, on all occasions, ties herself to observe, that form insurmountable barriers and preventives of innovation. Whenever the danger of error, or the contagion of heresy, renders it necessary for her to define the law of truth, in order to fix the faith, or perplexity of the faithful, she ties herself not only to regulate her definitions by the authority of the sacred scriptures, but to explain the sacred scriptures, as they have always, in each preceding age, been explained before. Placing before her the decisions of every general council, she approves and sanctions these; professing, that any deviation from them would be a deviation from the paths of truth; ---consulting the doctrines of the venerable fathers of the early ages, and the unanimous and universal voice of ancient tradition, she adopts their testimony, as the living commentary upon the sacred volume; and she solemnly binds herself to receive nothing but what they have unanimously professed, and to sanction nothing but what they have unanimously approved. Thus circumstanced, it is plain that so far from rendering herself the author or the mistress of the faith of her subjects, she

does every thing to divest herself of the possibility of attempting such an evil. If even she had the inclination, she acknowledges that she has not the power. The fact is, she has neither the one nor the other. Innovation is quite inconsistent with her constitution.

(K) PAGE 26.

On the necessity of an infallible tribunal.

IF the unity of faith—and the protestant admits it—be a necessary appendage of the true religion; if the stability of faith—and he admits this too—be an essential quality in the true believer, then I infer, and I think the inference plain, as any demonstration in the rule of morals—that a tribunal, such as that which the catholic reveres, is necessary and essential.

To whoever reflects on the countless varieties of the human character, the infinite shades of prejudices and passions, the differences of dispositions, feelings, and capacities, the motley forms of habits, interests, and educations—to whoever reflects upon these circumstances, to him it must almost appear folly to undertake to prove, that, let what may be the nature of the truth which is held out to general contemplation, or proposed to general acceptance, *all*

would not behold it in the same point of view, nor embrace it with the same ready acquiescence. No, not even if it were the most rational truth imaginable—though it were hung round with marks of wisdom, and set off with a blaze of evidence, would all equally agree in its propriety, its clearness, and identity. We have seen even the demonstrations of mathematics, the most simple truths in physics, the most incontestible maxims of reason called in question, and called in question, not by the ignorant and unlettered, but by men who have stood upon the highest eminences of polished literature. There have been men, who have contested the demonstrations of Archimedes and Euclid, denied the existence of bodies, disputed the possibility of motion, and blasphemed the most incontestible maxims of morality. Formed as men are, the playthings of passion, and the dupes of the imagination, there is nothing so impossible to establish among them as unanimity of opinion,—as there is nothing, in fact, so rare in the walks of life. To suppose it possible, were to suppose what is neither in the nature of men, nor in the nature of truths. It were supposing, that men have all the same acuteness to discern, the same capacity to comprehend, the same industry to investigate, and the same impartiality to acknowledge. It were supposing, that truths have always the same aspect, and are placed, always, in the same situation,—that they

are never obscured by clouds, elevated upon eminences, nor surrounded by rocks, precipices, labyrinths, and mazes. But the case is, neither do men all resemble each other, nor do truths—even the plainest truths—always present themselves in the same attitudes and features.

Hence, suppose a truth, which is obscure, be proposed to general contemplation and acceptance, it is obvious, that men will disagree about its signification, and interpret it, conformably to the dictates of their passions, their fancy, or their interests. But add to its obscurity the implication of some duty, or of some restraint upon the heart—that is, suppose it be difficult and repulsive, or sublime and painful,—the consequence would be, that few would understand it, in the same manner, and still fewer adopt it, as a rule of conduct.—It is a circumstance which is unfortunate, as it is incontestible, that it is much more easy to impress errors, than truths, and to instil pernicious maxims, than to imprint virtuous ones. The reason is—error is more attractive to the perversity of the mind, than truth; and vice more congenial to its corruption, than virtue. To impress truth, you must not only convince the understanding, you must gratify the heart: you must interest both. The understanding will not long retain the impressions of a truth, which the heart dislikes.—Either it will shut its eyes, or turn them away

from its contemplation. The proof of all this is, every day, before us. Error is more common far, than truth, vice more prevalent far, than virtue. Among the ignorant, in particular, and the vulgar, the mere admiration of novelty—whatever be its absurdity—is sufficient to seduce and captivate them. Present to them aught that is unusual, under a pleasing form, they will embrace it with avidity, and sacrifice to its phantoms the substantial benefits of the truth. The vulgar are, nearly all, like the inhabitants of those barbarous nations which travellers describe, who, indifferent to the real and valuable objects which are shewn them, prefer the tinsel-toy, the necklace and the feather. Whatever be the importance or the evidence of truth—though you press it upon them, with all the energies of eloquence, unless it be grateful to their passions, their prejudices, or their interests, they prefer the glare of falsehood to its brightness, and the illusions of seduction to its purity.

Therefore, to come to the truths of revealed religion.—The truths of revealed religion, are, in the first place, obscure—impervious to all the researches of human industry, though it be united with all the acuteness of human penetration; they are, in the next place, repulsive—imposing upon the heart a series of restraints, the most painful to its corruption, and the most repugnant to its self-love. Consequently, if the principles which I

have just laid down, be correct, how can it be expected or imagined, formed and situated as men are, that all will, *without a guide*, understand them alike; or *without an adequate authority to enforce them*, embrace them, unreservedly? No, doubtless, although even their necessity be admitted, the necessity of believing them in their genuine signification; and the necessity too of believing them steadily, yet will men left to the guidance of their own judgment, incessantly misunderstand and misinterpret them; often they will disbelieve, and not unfrequently deride and vilify them. It is therefore manifest, that if these be evils, that should be prevented, the only medium to prevent them, is the institution of an authority, or the erection of a tribunal, which error cannot mislead—an *infallible and supreme tribunal*, revered by the faithful as the guardian of revelation, and respected by them as the arbiter of their belief. It is, indeed, impossible for good sense to conceive any other medium, that is competent to prevent the evils of discord and disbelief, or adequate to maintain the unity and integrity of the truths of revelation. It is the only means which bears any proportion to these greatly important ends.

That such tribunal is, indeed, equal to these ends, it cannot be called in question. Men, of course, will submit their reason, and regulate their

faith by the direction of a power, which, they are assured, cannot deceive them. They will believe with steadiness, where they are convinced, that error cannot steal in. The advantages also, which result from such tribunal, are obvious as its necessity. Put the case—and it is a case which has happened incessantly, and will happen to the end of time—put the case, that a mere doubt arise among the faithful respecting any point of christian doctrine, how would it be removed, without the interference of such tribunal? Did each appeal to his reason, to his feelings, to the supposed dictate of inspiration,—as these would all be found to differ in different judgments and capacities, the consequence would be, that, as each would decide for himself, there would be as many opinions nearly as judges, and the doubt, so far from being removed, would be augmented. Such, indeed, is the fact among all the various sects of christianity. All, where indolence, or ignorance, or bigotry, do not induce them *to believe any thing*, all is doubt, uncertainty and instability. But, admit an infallible tribunal. It speaks; and the faithful revering it, as the living oracle established by God to interpret the contests, which may arise among them, hear its determination, and unreservedly, to adopt it. The doubt vanishes, and uncertainty changes to stability and conviction. It is the same, in the cases, where error attempt to diffuse its poison, or the love of

novelty labours to impair the integrity of revelation. The church speaks; the faithful hear her voice, and respecting it, as the voice of the "spirit of truth," the error and the novelty cease almost to be contagious; at least, they cease to be contagious to all, but the weak, the wicked, and the profane.

I have remarked, in my discourse, that the reformers, aware of the necessity of some kind of means to preserve the unity of faith, and check the progress of error, had attempted, at different periods, to substitute various expedients in room of the great medium, which they had rejected. They substituted, first, I remarked, the influences of reason. But these did not suffice to produce the desired effect, for as reason differed in almost every individual, in almost every individual it generated a different belief, while in some it generated disbelief.—They substituted the holy scriptures: but the scriptures, although they are the sources of truth and unity, became, under their interpretations, the innocent occasions of fresh heresy and new divisions. By rejecting the authority of the church, says Bolingbroke, and fixing in its stead the authority of the scriptures, "*we freed ourselves from spiritual tyranny, but we fell into spiritual anarchy.*"—They substituted the aids of inspiration, but these still produced the same variety of opinion, with the additional evil of a more determined obstinacy in its defence. "*It produced,*"

says the same philosophical writer, "*as many forms of faith, as whimsical teachers could invent.*" The mischief of all these resources was this,—they proved every thing, and therefore nothing. They proved any thing, that passion, or pride, or bigotry, or ignorance, or the fancy pleased; and so far from supporting unity, or preventing the growth of error, they increased disorder, and swelled the tide of heresy.

At the opening of the reformation, its apostles, with one voice—and that voice was loud as the thunder's peal shaking the foundations of some of the strongest fabrics of the universe—its apostles had declaimed against the influences of authority in religion. They had called it tyranny founded upon usurpation, and upholden by interest and superstition. "*Only*"—this was their incessant cry—"only read the scriptures, and judge for yourselves. Your reason and the voice of God will instruct you, how to understand them." We know it—these addresses had their effect. Men read, judged, decided for themselves, and as it was natural, and expected, abandoned the ancient fold. But then too here occurred the thing, which though equally natural, was not, equally expected;—still reading, and judging, and deciding for themselves, men soon abandoned, likewise, the apostles, who first animated them to read, and induced them to employ their own reason, as their

guide. The Lutherans,—multitudes of them—became Calvinists, the Calvinists, Independents; the Independents, Anabaptists—each sect, the prolific parent of twenty other sects, each differing from each other, as much as each differed from its parent institute. But, see now the inconsistency! The men, who had just vilified authority—the voices, which had just so emphatically proclaimed it tyranny, now preached its benefits, and vociferated, still louder, its necessity.—Their very inconsistency is a striking attestation of its necessity.—“Obey,” they now called out, “*obey your superiors: submit to the pastors, whom God has appointed to rule the faithful. It is theirs to instruct you; yours to follow the guidance of their wisdom. For what,*” they added, “*becomes of the subordination, which the scriptures, so frequently, enjoin, if each one be the arbiter of his own belief; or what becomes of humility, which religion, so forcibly, inculcates, if every individual be an oracle and a judge?*” Thus did the apostles of the reformation, like all the apostles of revolution and rebellion, preach liberty to the subjects of established authority, and obedience to the dupes of their ambition. To seduce the catholic, they urged the necessity of discussion, and to restrain him, when seduced, the necessity of submission. To the catholic they presented the most unlimited mental emancipation, to the protestant blind obedience and implicit faith. Yes; they even

while inculcating to the former the tyranny of authority, and the folly of believing creeds, exercised over the latter the most arbitrary despotism, and, in many instances, compelled him not only to receive their new creeds, but *to swear*, that he believed them to be inspired. In short, in every case, where the bold sectarist had the talents to impose upon the credulity of the public, the good fortune to gain adherents, and the power to form an establishment, he always terminated his apostolical career by contradicting his first doctrines, recalling the influences of authority, and erecting a new tribunal, after the plan, and upon the ruins of that, which his industry had just destroyed.

After proving the necessity of authority from the conduct of the protestants, it may perhaps appear singular, that I should point out the inconsistency of such conduct. It seems almost like proving a proposition, and then proving, that the arguments, which establish it, are illusive. However, such is, by no means, the case. The very inconsistency, I have observed, is itself the strongest attestation of the necessity of authority; for if the men, who had treated it as a system of tyranny, and discarded it from their principles, were themselves reduced to call it back, it could only have been, because they were forcibly convinced of its necessity.

To dwell, then, a few moments, upon the cir-

cumstance of this inconsistency.—Tutored as the disciples of the reformation were to the maxims and love of liberty, it is not to be expected, that all would, tamely, acquiesce in the re-assumption of the ancient principles of authority; above all it is not to be expected, that they would, tamely, acquiesce in submission to a set of men, who had built their own power upon the rejection of these principles. In the great body of protestants, there were men of the greatest talents, united with the greatest erudition, and who had detached themselves from the parent institute, more from their ardor for liberty, than from any other principle. These felt all the inconsistency of the conduct of the first reformers, and, on several occasions, very forcibly resented it. Some of their remonstrances against the conduct of Luther and Calvin, are eloquent and impressive. I will transcribe, as one of the best specimens of such remonstrances, what, at a subsequent period, the Arminians—a class of protestants, after the Socinians, the most consistent of all the sectarists—made on the occasion of the synod of Dort. (That synod, it is well known, had imperiously demanded the acceptance of its decrees.) “*Why,*” say these able advocates of protestant liberty, “*why exact, that our inspiration or judgment should yield to your opinion? The opinion of every society, our apostles, the first reformers, declared to be fallible; and consequently, to exact submission to its dic-*

tates, they with, great consistency, defined to be tyranny. Thus, they defined it, in regard of the church of Rome, and yourselves have sanctioned their decision. Why, therefore, exercise a dominion over us, which you stigmatise, as tyranny in a church, compared with whose greatness, you dwindle into insignificance? If there be any crime in resisting the decisions of our pastors, then are you, and we, and all of us, guilty of resisting the authority of the church of Rome, which existed before us, and of which our forefathers were a portion. If, indeed, such resistance be a crime, then let us altogether abandon the reformation, blot out the stain of our origin, and run back to the bosom of catholicity. Or, if such resistance be no crime, why require from us a submission, which we do not owe you? You object to us, that our doctrine is contrary to the word of God, and we assert, that it is yours, which is repugnant to it. When the church of Rome, imperiously, demanded the submission of our fathers, our fathers requested to be, first, instructed and convinced of the truth of the doctrines thus pressed upon them; and because they were not convinced of their truth, they refused to subscribe to them. We present to you the same request. Instruct and convince us. Or, since you do not convince us---as your decisions contrary to our inspirations and to the dictate of our reason, allow us to differ from you as you do from the parent church. Either, in short, allow us

the liberty, which our forefathers claimed, and yourselves approve, or let us altogether run back to the fold, which they abandoned." What solidity of reasoning, and what force of eloquence! How strikingly is here pointed out the inconsistency of the pretensions, which any protestant establishment can claim to control faith by authority, or to regulate creeds, under the pretext of superior wisdom! Most certainly, neither the fathers of the synod of Dort, nor the ministers of any protestant establishment, which like the fathers of Dort arrogate to themselves the right of controlling faith, could make any rational answer to the above remonstrances.

It is not, here, the place to shew, that the authority, which each protestant establishment, in opposition to the principles of protestantism, assumes to itself of regulating the faith of its members, in order to maintain unity among them, is quite incompetent to this end. I shall shew this, in a subsequent illustration. Suffice it, here, to refer the reader to a tolerably lucid proof of this incompetency, in the establishment of this country, in which unity, not only does not prevail, among its members, in general,—it does not subsist even among its clergy, who, if their chains were not cobwebs to them, should seem, very strongly, rivited to it. "*In the body of our clergy,*" says Nightingale, "*we have Calvinian, Arminian, Unitarian, Swedenburgian, Pelagian, Arian, Socinian, Sabellian, Trinitarian,*

and I do not know how many other sorts of clergymen, some starving in a curacy, and others fattening in a bishopric. We have Methodistical clergymen, and clergymen with no method at all. All these classes of clergymen are retained in the church, live upon her revenues, and are protected by her laws." And Mason Good remarks, speaking of the articles of the established creed, "*even these articles are very differently interpreted by the right reverend bench itself.*"

Hence it follows, not that authority is not necessary to maintain unity in faith, but that protestant authority is not necessary for that purpose.—Not that authority is not competent to maintain it, but that protestant authority is not competent:—it follows, that an authority, such only as the catholic church reveres, is necessary and competent to that end—an authority supreme, unerring, and infallible—the institution of our great legislator, and as such, venerated by the faithful.

(A) PAGE 32.

On the illiberality of the superior protestant clergy.

IT ought to appear singular, I have had the occasion to remark before, that this nation, which is superior to every other in general liberality, should be inferior to every other in liberality to Roman catholics. But, it ought to appear even more than singular, to whoever has not traced the cause of the apparent phenomenon, that the most enlightened portion of the nation, and which ought also from religious principles, to be the most liberal, is, amid all the variety of its members, the most illiberal, and the most intolerant. And, yet, such is the fact! Whoever will consult the opinions and feelings of the nation in regard of catholics, will discover, that while the vulgar are the dupes of the strongest prejudices against us—while the walks of opulence and the avenues of power are crowded with men, who condemn or dislike us—the clergy, he will find it true, are those, who, above all others, entertain not only the strongest prejudices, but in general—for, I by no means allude to all—the fiercest animosity against us; and, without cause or provocation, still, incessantly exert the malignant influence of their

talents in fomenting that ill-will, or feeding that virulence, which it is their duty to extinguish. The few extracts, which I shall subjoin to this and the following illustration, will present a tolerable attestation of their spirit. I might, indeed, produce a tolerable attestation of the spirit of the higher members of the clergy, by an appeal to the late discussions of our claims, in the house of lords. On some of these occasions, not *one solitary* individual had the liberality to give his vote, that justice should be done to a large, respectable, and avowedly loyal portion of his fellow subjects.* Not, indeed, that I mean to infer, that whoever, on those occasions, gave his vote against our claims, is therefore an illiberal man, or a bigot. I say only, that their vote is "*a tolerable*" attestation of their spirit. It is probable, that mere political motives, the creatures and effects of accident, induced some

* On the occasion of the last discussion of our claims, I relate it with gratitude and pleasure, one very distinguished prelate—the Bishop of Norwich—had the liberality to vote in our favor. The speech, which this great man then delivered, is a monument of wisdom, which marks, equally, the greatness of his mind, and the goodness of his heart.—In imitation of the beautiful and classic compliment, which Cremutius pays, I believe, to Cæsar, when he tells him, that *not Brutus and Cassius only shall be remembered*—in imitation of this compliment, I say to this prelate—and every catholic feeling repeats it with me—not Grenville, or Grey alone shall be remembered by us; Bathurst, too, shall for ever be dear to our gratitude.

distinguished members of the bench to give a vote, which their liberality disavowed.

That the English protestant, like the protestant of every other country, should, till the late dawn of liberality, have been illiberal, is a circumstance, which a variety of causes, both moral and political, may explain. The phenomenon—or rather only apparent phenomenon—is, why, when other establishments have become liberal, and the great pretext for illiberality among us is done away, ours alone retains nearly all its ancient want of moderation? One reason is, certainly, this, that although in other nations the first impulse, that was given to the business of the reformation was strong and violent, it was in this nation, stronger and more violent, than in any other, and therefore continued to vibrate here, when, there it subsided to comparative calmness. In this country, too—each reader knows it, who knows aught of the history of his country—in this country the zeal against popery, has always been considered as the best test of orthodoxy, the strongest recommendation to public favour, and the surest (almost an unfailing) step to patronage, to preferment and to honours. I honestly believe, that with the exception of those, (though, *not all* should be excepted) but with the exception of those, who from high birth and exalted patronage had a claim to the great dignities of the church—I honestly believe, that it would on ex-

amination be discovered, that since the era of the reformation, above all at certain periods, there have been few, very few of our bishops, who did not owe their honours to their zeal against us, and who did not pass to the episcopal throne through the nasty puddles of calumny and the abuse of popery:—Or, if it be not profane to allude to so pagan a comparison, it would on examination, I think, be found, that not as the Romans passed through the temple of virtue to enter the temple of honor, these gentlemen, nearly all, passed through the temple of illiberality to enter the temple of riches. Owing to circumstances also, which it is not mine to explain, this ancient passage to the episcopacy is not even now walled up. If, *now*, an examination were instituted into the methods, by which men of no fortunes, but considerable talents, attained the episcopacy, I think, it would be found true, that a very general method has been the abuse of popery.—And who, but he that is unacquainted with the temper of our present administration—an administration hostile almost to popery, as that of Walsingham and Cecil,—who, but he, can doubt, that such method is still, by far, the most effectual.*

* I mark the date, and suggest the motive of this apprehension, lest, at a subsequent period, the imputation, which it implies, might be referred to a time, to which it is not applicable, or to men, who do not merit it. We live, now, under the administration, descriptively, and very properly, called the **NO POPERY** administration; *an.* 1808-9.

That men, whose infant reason had been cradled and nursed to prejudices against popery, whose subsequent education, in the schools, or at the university, still fed their early prejudices, and whose pursuits in society present few opportunities to correct them—that such men, from such causes only, should be illiberal to us, it is natural to expect. But if to these causes you add, also, the impulses of profit and worldly comforts—if it become the interest of men to insult us—if their insult be considered as the proof of their orthodoxy and the effect of zeal, and receive the rewards of orthodoxy and zeal, of course, hosts of adversaries will rise up to villify us. There will always be men to combat any kind of truth, or to defend any form of error, if it be made an object of their interest and ambition to do it. The walks of life are crowded with men of this description, who offer more oblations at the shrine of the god of riches, than at any other fane—who will sacrifice almost any principle of piety to the furtherance of their temporal welfare,—or, who like the late Dr. Paley “*cannot afford,*”—so he used to say of himself—“*to keep a conscience.*” Interest, too, is a cheat, giving easily to falsehood the face of truth, and to truth the face of error.

Interest, that waves on party colour'd wings
 Turn'd to the sun, she casts a thousand dyes,
 And as she turns, the colours fall or rise.

It is to one or other of the above maxims, that reason must recur to explain the insults and misrepresentations, of which a large portion of the protestant clergy are guilty in their delineations of our religion. We are insulted, often, and often misrepresented, because it is the interest of our adversaries to insult and misrepresent us. And certain it is, that were I a protestant clergyman, and an eloquent man, who could "ill afford to keep a conscience," and who were feebly held by the ties of conscience, it should be by insulting popery, that I would seek preferment; and by persevering in insult, hope confidently, to attain preferment.

By the principle of prejudice united with interest, it is easy to account for the hostility of one portion of our exalted clergy, and by the principle of prejudice joined to ignorance, it would be, equally, easy to account for the animosity of the other. Not, indeed I have just observed, that under these two classes, I mean to include the whole body of our episcopacy. I mean only to allude to those, who traduce us by their writings, or insult us in their discourses. Thank Heaven, the protestant prelates, although I may have seemed to impeach their liberality, on the occasion of the discussion of our claims,—are not all illiberal. On Norwich's palace the ray of liberality shines with the brightest lustre. It beams, too, upon the palace, where once the horrid spirit of the sanguinary Abbot used

to frown vengeance on us. It gilds York's mansion, likewise, and it smiles upon the mansions of two or three other prelates, whose predecessors were piously employed "in beating, incessantly, the drum ecclesiastic," and in animating the public to abhor us. However, peace to all those, who are, not yet, equally liberal with the Bathursts, the Suttons, and the Vernons. Only, may the ray, which illumines their palaces, be soon diffused over the palace of every prelate of the united kingdoms, and may they all discover---which, really, is the case---that it is the interest of the nation and of the establishment itself, to extend the influences of justice, moderation, and liberality to catholics.

As I shall present extracts from the works and discourses of only a small number of prelates, I will give the general character of all their compositions, on the subject of popery. With some small variations in the distortion of feature, or some trifling difference in the darkness of the shades of their portraits, either of popery or the papist, there is a very striking similitude in them all. It is easy to discover, that all have been educated in the same school, and formed under the same masters. The general features of these compositions are misrepresentation and insult. They first attribute to us what we do not profess, and then ridicule us, or blame us---sometimes, good-natured men! only pity us,---for professing it. The misrepresentation

is an apology for the ridicule; which, in reality, would be merited, if their accounts of our doctrines were correct. To believe their accounts of our doctrines, there is nothing in paganism so absurd, nothing in error so preposterous, nothing in the annals of folly and superstition so foolish, so pitiful, so bigoted. Our principles, too, they tell the public, are even more horrible, than our speculative doctrines. While they often, very charitably, affect to laugh at the latter, as ridiculous, rather than dangerous, our principles they exhibit in colours, which are calculated either to excite the public aversion, or to arm its apprehensions. We profess, they solemnly tell their readers, or their hearers, principles, “that sanction falsehood and deceit: that sanctify murder, that canonize all the various enormities of vice.” Often, in order to give relief to their portraits—to heighten their colouring, and to throw more darkness upon their shades, they have recourse to the awful repository of terrific objects—the book of revelations; and borrowing, among these frightful things, the most frightful, they exhibit them, as the true and genuine representation of our religion. Our supreme pastor, for example, they triumphantly display, adorned with all the emblems and decorations of Antichrist. Indeed, the late great, good, and amiable Bishop Hurd, observes, that “*the circumstance of making and believing the pope to be Anti-*

christ, is the first leading principle of the reformation!" What wonder, of course, that the holy principle should, incessantly, be inculcated! In like manner, they depict our church, as "*the great antichristian apostacy, the mother of fornications and abominations, full of the names of blasphemy, and drunk with the blood of the saints.*" Suffice it to say, that they draw, as Dryden remarks, a hideous daub, which they call the portrait of popery, in which is

Nor line, nor look, nor shade, nor colour true.

The late Dr. Geddes, who, I believe, never wrote a word, that was dictated by an overweening affection to catholicity, and who always loved to admire its enemies, whenever either their conduct or their writings were, even distantly, calculated to merit admiration—says, that, "*of at least, a hundred combatants, who have, within these last twenty years, declared themselves the champions of protestancy, or rather the adversaries of popery, I am perfectly safe to say, there are not five, who have not shot at us from an envenomed quiver; who have not misrepresented our doctrines, and realized, by their injustice to us, the fable of the wolf, that quarrelled with the lamb.*" The doctor was, certainly, more conversant than I am, with the writings of the protestant clergy, and I regret, that when he seems to insinuate, that there, possibly, may be five,

who have combated us fairly, he has not pointed out, who any of the five may be. I should admire, and could love the man, who had the candor to attack us liberally. But for my own part, I not only do not believe, that the last twenty years have produced five liberal combatants of popery, I do not believe—I cordially wish my judgment may be rash—that they have produced *one*.

It is their duty all these good men think,
T'espouse the cause, by which they eat and drink;
And zeal peculiar privilege affords,
Indulging latitude to deeds and words.

It is not that I mean to censure any protestant for combating our religion. I censure him only for doing it, uncandidly. I do not censure him even for combating it with warmth; I censure him, only, because he does it with intemperance---because he does not reason, but quarrel with us ---not refute, but insult us---not point out our errors, but misrepresent our truths. All this, whilst it is repugnant to the mild maxims of religion, is also unwise, unjust, and illiberal; and if, too, the love of reputation be dear to their feelings, it is---should the public become liberal and enlightened---adverse to their future reputation.

It is repugnant to the maxims of religion. Even the defence of religion should, like religion itself, be all benevolence. Dictated by the solicitude,

which man should feel for his fellow man, it should lean upon the basis of charity, and though it forcibly blame the crime of error, it should breathe all the tenderness of compassion for those that err. But, to employ abuse and misrepresentation,—to deride, vilify, and offend the men to whom the supposed defence is addressed, in order to persuade, enlighten, and convince them,—this is offering an insult to every principle of religion. It is clothing her in the garb of passion, and putting on her the mantle of falsehood. It is condemning her to do mischief, under the pretext of doing good.

It is, also, unwise. Wisdom is the sister of religion, and like religion, is calm, candid, and benevolent. She does not labour to break, she studies always how to draw closer the bands of union. Violence, or invective, or illiberality, she considers as “the reason of folly,” the expression of the weakness of the cause, which needs, and the proof of the weakness of the men who use it. The only authority in her eye, which either the possession of the truth, or the zeal for truth, gives to any one individual over another, is the right to enlighten his ignorance, not to deride his misfortune,—the privilege to labour to persuade, not the prerogative to insult him. Wisdom condemns rancor and insincerity, more far, than she reprobates ignorance and error.

It is unjust; because by holding out the catholic religion as foolish, idolatrous and cruel—which alone, if not evinced by tolerable proofs, is an injustice—it holds out the catholic—which is, perhaps a greater injustice—as a fool, an idolater, and a dangerous citizen. It tends to rob him of that confidence, to which, as a man, he stands entitled, to deprive him of that respect, to which as a citizen, he has a claim, and to take from him those prerogatives, to which, as a subject, he has a right. I might add too, that in these times, under the circumstances in which the nation is placed, it is, or might at least eventually prove, a serious injustice to the nation, because as it is calculated to create discontent, it is, consequently, calculated to create disunion; and disunion, at the present period might be, I do not say fatal, but seriously injurious to the interest and welfare of the country.

It is illiberal; for not only does the protestant fabric in this nation repose upon the broad platform of catholicity,—not only has it imitated its form of government, and adopted many of its laws, canons, and modes of discipline,—but to it, and to the munificence of our good and pious catholic ancestors, it owes all its opulence and splendor. To the catholic, the prelate owes his see, his lawn sleeves, and his luxuries---the prebendary, his stall, his livings, and his comforts---the parson, his parish, his tithes, and his Easter-dues. Surely

these circumstances alone should render the protestant ministry, if not grateful,—modest: they should induce them to be, if not respectful,—moderate. At least, they should stay insult, and silence calumny.

It is injurious, in short, to the future reputation, to which it is probable, these men aspire. The violent, during the fever of passion, or the fermentation of fanaticism, may enjoy the approbation of the party, whose doctrines they find it their interest to defend. The bigot, of course, will applaud the bigot, and even the good mistaken man, who duped by ignorance, or cheated by misrepresentation, is the victim of prejudice—even he, for a time, may applaud the apparent zeal, which most loudly vociferates insult, or which, most illiberally combats truth. Fortunately, however, there is a reflux in the human mind from violence and illiberality to moderation and benevolence; and a reflux too, which sometimes in its ebb, is proportioned in its depression, to the height, to which, under the storm, it had risen in its exaltation. And then, the consequence is, it despises the men, whom, before, it had admired, and contemns their writings, however in other respects valuable, because they want those best of all recommendations to esteem—candor, calmness, and liberality. It is thus, at present, the wise and temperate despise the works of the ancient heroes of

the reformation. And posterity more temperate and wise, perhaps, than we are, will despise the works of the men, to whom I have been alluding. Discovering, that the objects which they had represented as realities, are only the dreams of their own imaginations; that what they had exhibited as monsters, are but visions conjured up by their prejudices to cheat the weak—discovering this, posterity, while it may laugh at the credulity, which believed them, and will certainly pity those whom the credulity may have injured, will mark down its authors as the enemies of society, and of the cause which they had so improperly pretended to support. Whoever is ambitious of the approbation of posterity, or whoever wishes his memory to be hung round with eulogies, let him be assured of this, that it is not by misrepresentation and insult, that he will attain these honours. The reputation which the wise man values, must rest upon the basis of truth and charity.*

* The very learned and very liberal Doctor Parr, not only bears witness to the intemperance which I have attributed to the protestant clergy, but reprobates it with a severity of term, which I have not ventured to employ. *"I am pained,"* he says, *"with the outrageous invectives which are thrown out against the church of Rome. I must confess that they appear to me not only unjust and indiscreet, but INHUMAN."* *"It is,"* he adds, *"unworthy of an Englishman and a protestant to treat the catholics as incorrigible outcasts from society, and stubborn apostates from all religious truth."*—
Notes on the life of Mr. Fox.

But I will now proceed to give a few extracts from the writings of some of our modern prelates, as specimens of the spirit which I have censured, both in this note and in my discourse.

Dr. S. B.

Dr. S. B. has presented in his writings, and much more frequently in his addresses from the pulpit, some striking specimens of this spirit: In a discourse which he preached before the lords in the year 1799, he tells their lordships, "that popery is exceedingly corrupt, and by its corruption, liable to the objections of thinking men. It is continued in many powerful kingdoms, not from any opinions of its evidence and truth, but from an utter indifference to all religious truth whatever! Its effects upon those who conducted public affairs, or ruled public manners, were *habitual insincerity in themselves*, and a neglect of that attention, and of those provisions which are necessary to inculcate the principles of any religion, and to preserve its influence upon the people!"

But this, though illiberal, is all tenderness when compared to what, on two subsequent occasions, his lordship has presented to the public.---About two years ago, kind, loving pastor! he preached and published a sermon, which, in his tenderness, he calls his last farewell to his diocesans, and which,

in his wisdom, he probably considered the best legacy, which his solicitude for their salvation, or his zeal for orthodoxy could bequeath. At all events, it is a very strong attestation of his lordship's sentiments respecting popery, and a very striking monument of his talents and acquirements in the art of insult.

From this sermon I shall transcribe only the conclusion. After attributing to us doctrines which we do not believe, and misrepresenting those which we do believe: after accusing us of a mutilation of the decalogue, of which we are not guilty, and corrupting the scripture himself to substantiate his charges against us: after describing us as the patrons of ignorance and the enemies of learning, he thus sums up all he has said against us. "This is the general conclusion, that the doctrines and usages of the church of Rome, are,—derogatory from the honour of God—injurious to the distinguishing principles of christianity—obstructive to the diffusion of scripture knowledge; and therefore to the progress of the gospel—detrimental to the cultivation of the original languages of the scriptures: and in its effects to the best purposes of ancient learning."* If such be the conclusion, let the reader judge what the premises must have been.

In the last pamphlet, which his lordship has given to the public, and which is designed to be a defence

* Bishop of Durham's charge, page 11.

and elucidation of the preceding sermon—without any compunction for his past illiberality, or any misgivings for his intemperance, which both the chills of age and the interval for reflection should have cooled,—he persists in the same career, and may perhaps seem to have added fresh fuel to his former flame.

I will not transcribe any paragraphs or sentences from this pamphlet. Suffice it to state, that its professed object is to prove, that we papists are guilty of idolatry,—of blasphemy and sacrilege:—“*of idolatry, by the adoration of the host—of blasphemy, by the invocation of angels and saints,—and of sacrilege, by the suppression of half the Eucharist.*” *

Those pagan days have passed away, when almost every form of vice and folly, had, equally, with piety and wisdom, its temple, its altar and its priesthood, else, we might now perhaps have had sanctuaries erected to illiberality and dulness. I only remark, that if such, indeed, were still the state of things, nothing would be more easy, than to point out the men, who would answer, very admirably, and figure with singular distinction, in the capacity of the high priests of these hallowed fanes.

I do not attribute the illiberality of Dr. S. B. to malice. I hope, and believe, that he is incapable

of so dark a crime. I attribute it to ignorance; and his ignorance, I attribute to prejudice. I think that he does not know our religion, and therefore hates it,—and he hates it, because he does not know it. The case is extremely common; indeed, it is almost the universal case with the adversaries of popery. Like the enemies of christianity, whom Tertullian mentions—trained early to entertain the falsest notions of it, they, of course, dislike it; and disliking it, they, of course, shrink from the study of its doctrines. *Malunt nescire, quia jam oderunt.* Without this principle, it is impossible to explain either the illiberality of Dr. S. B. or the bigotry of a multitude of protestants, who like him, misrepresent and vilify our tenets.—As I have just quoted Tertullian, I will add to my quotation the admonition or reproach, which almost immediately after the above words, that great and sensible writer addresses to the enemies of the true religion:—

Si damnas, cur non inquiris?

It would be useful to Dr. S. B. if, before he publishes the labours, which he promises the public, he would follow the advice of Tertullian, and inquire, wisely, into our doctrines.*

*To the charge and pamphlet of Dr. S. B. answers have been returned, which, while they place their author in the first ranks of the most acute, elegant, and distinguished writers, place his adversary, and a host of his

THE LATE DR. PORTEUS.

It is, in general, wrong and indecorous to say aught unhandsome of the dead. Their defects, it is very properly thought, should be buried with them: and as, too, they possess not the means of self-defence, it is considered an act of cowardice to defame them. Hence, the very just and religious maxim, *De mortuis, nil nisi bonum*. However, the fact, is, the works of Dr. P. still live, and live to add, daily, to the tide of public prejudice, and to injure our religion. They are much read, because their author was revered; and they are believed, because he was thought incapable of a falsehood. Therefore, since his lordship still lives, as an author, there can be no breach of charity, if I present a few reflections on him, in that capacity, and prove from his works, that he was neither that liberal, nor candid man whom the public partiality respects.

adversary's supporters—for crowds, with more courage than prudence have rushed forward to defend his lordship—on the lowest steps, to which, almost, it is possible for aught like learning, or talents, or liberality, to be degraded. I know no instances, either in ancient or modern controversy, in which the contrast between the contending writers is more prominent; in which wit is more strikingly opposed to dulness—learning to inaccuracy—taste to inelegance—and candor to insincerity.

I shall present only a few extracts from a little work which the Doctor published several years ago,—a work, professedly, only compiled from the writings of Archbishop Secker, but, really, it is believed, composed by himself. Not, indeed, that in respect to the illiberality of the thing, it is material, whether the work were composed, or only compiled and published by Dr. P.: for it is, at least, as illiberal to compile and publish an illiberal work, as it is to compose one. But if it be true also, which is suspected, that Dr. P., sensible that the work was extremely illiberal, did not compile, but compose it,—and to screen his own illiberality gave the discredit of it to Archbishop Secker, then was his lordship doubly illiberal,—illiberal for composing the work, and perhaps most illiberal for the odious and cowardly act of duplicity. At all events, Dr. P. acknowledges, that he compiled, and did certainly publish the little volume; and it is, of course, as much his work,—bearing his approbation, and stamped with his sanction, as if himself had written it. But not even is this the sole motive, why I notice it. I notice it also, because the society calling itself the *society for the propagation of christian doctrine*,—but which in this instance, is not the society for the propagation of christian charity—animated, apparently, by the same spirit which inspired its author, presents it almost every year to the public in the form of a new edition, and with

pious prodigality scatters it, in all the walks and avenues of society. The work is meant to be—indeed is called—an antidote against popery; and it, really, is to the man, who has the voracity to swallow all that it contains, an antidote with a witness. I do not know, that like the lynx-eyed bishop of Derry (Dr. Down) his lordship computes our errors at the moderate, though tolerably round number, of *six hundred!*—(I wonder that Dr. D. did not bring them exactly to the dreadful number 666) yet does he make them amount to a very frightful multitude—frightful for their impiety, and disgusting for their folly. I present only a few extracts from the work: the spirit of the writer is as well discovered in a few lines, as in many pages.

“The popish clergy had the wickedness to support transubstantiation with zeal, as an artifice that increased the authority of the priests; for what could not he do, who, as they blasphemously express it, could make God?”—(p. 38.)

“They do every thing they can to make the ignorant believe, that indulgences deliver the departed from Hell.”—(p. 53.)

“They always refuse to grant leave to read the scriptures, where they dare refuse it; and when they grant it, it is only for a time; nor dare the poor deluded people help themselves.”—(p. 66.)

“This is an art (the art of confounding a plain man in disputation) which the priests of the church

of Rome are well versed in. Indeed the chief part of their learning is to puzzle themselves first, and as many others as they can afterwards.”—(p. 33.)

“The strictest rules of life were laid down (by the popish clergy) for such as thought themselves bound to be strict; but for those who desired to be otherwise, superstitious observances were allowed to take the place of real duties. Without a zeal for such follies, the best man was reckoned to have but small hope of future happiness; and with a zeal for the notions and interests of holy church, the worst man was easily secured from future misery.”—(p. 55.)

Were Dr. P. still living, I would say to him—as I do say to all who resemble him in their illiberality,

C'est un mechant métier, que celui de medire.

What pity, that great talents, and great learning are not always generous and candid!—pity, for the sake of the man who possesses them; and pity, still more, for the sake of those who are the objects of his displeasure: for as Boileau remarks, immediately after the above quotation,

Le mal qu'on dit d'autrui ne produit que du mal.

I am one of those, who with the public in general, entertain a very high opinion of Dr. P's abilities—although they were not of the first order of great abilities—and I respect the general tenor of

his character, more even, than I esteem his abilities. But, like many other great and good men, he had his prejudices and partialities—for these are weeds that grow in every soil, and that insinuate and intertwine their tendrils with the foliage, and the flowers and the fruit of the fairest trees. I am willing to excuse much of his partialities to his own religion—he perhaps knew little about any other, nor conceived himself, perhaps, under any obligation to acquire such knowledge. But his prejudices against us, are, I think, inexcusable quite. He is, in regard of popery, an illiberal, harsh, uncandid writer—a bigot. The few attestations, which I have produced from his *brief refutation*, are incontestible vouchers of the accuracy of this opinion. Imputing to us doctrines the most odious and detestable, he imputes to us also—which is still more horrible—the most odious and detestable motives for teaching those doctrines. We, blasphemously, teach idolatry, and teach idolatry to increase our own authority! We teach, that indulgences deliver the dead from hell, and we teach it, for the purpose of cheating the poor deluded people of their money! Did his lordship only assert, that we are idolaters, and that we teach, that indulgences deliver the damned from hell, he should, at least, to justify the bold assertions, have presented something like a proof, or presumption of their correctness. But, to assert, too, that we teach

these horrible doctrines for the worst of purposes—this, to be asserted with decency, or with justice, should have been hung round with evidences, which not our prejudices or partiality could have denied. Good God! a religion enforcing idolatry to increase the authority of the priesthood, and recommending indulgences, in order to cheat the people! I have, just now, said, that did there exist a temple sacred to illiberality, it would be easy to find a priesthood to minister at its altars, and I think I may very safely add, that did there exist such a temple, the man who, *without proof*, attributes such doctrines and such motives to his fellow men, would figure, not inconspicuously, in one of the niches of its sanctuary.

Ah ! loin d'un cœur bien né, l'indigne politique
qui servile et cruelle

Au préjugés jaloux immole l'équité.

Dr. W.

With, nearly, the whole nation, I respect the character of Dr. W. As a writer his reputation is, very deservedly, great—as a scholar, his learning is respectable, and as a man of talents, any tribute, which I could pay them, would be much inferior to the admiration which they merit.—As a man I consider Dr. W. kind, liberal, and candid—as a pastor, I conceive him tolerant—and as a protestant, consistent.—I do, really, respect him, as a great and amiable prelate.

The works of Dr. W. I have read with considerable pleasure. Though extremely different from each other, they have all a share of merit, and sometimes they rise to excellence. In some of his charges, there is a boldness and consistency, which you seek, in vain, in the charges of any other member of the prelacy. Adopting the real principle of protestantism, and, apparently, emancipated from the control of creeds, he seems to believe just what his reason dictates, and consequently, to disbelieve, too, much of what other protestants revere.

The praises of liberality and beneficence, the horror of persecution, and the reprobation of intolerance are subjects which frequently occur in the series of nearly all his lordship's publications. He, sometimes, expresses his astonishment, how such a thing as animosity can possibly steal into the writings of sensible and candid men. "*The want of genuine moderation,*" he says, "*towards those who differ from us in religious opinions, seems to be the most unaccountable thing in the world.*" He even pronounces the dreadful sentence of reprobation upon those who are guilty of it. "*It is clear,*" he very properly asserts in one of his charges, "*from every page in the gospel, that we shall not merit the favor of Christ by maltreating one another, under the pretence of serving him.*"

Well; and who would not then suppose that the man, who from character, and principle, and

profession, is so liberal—who reprobates, so loudly, every species of animosity and immoderation—who would not suppose that he would extend his liberality even to the papist, and refrain, even in his regard, from what his piety deems, every where, so criminal? Certainly, whoever conceives the doctor to be a completely consistent man, would of course, expect all this. And yet is the reverse, unhappily, the case. Not that I think that Dr. W. would persecute us—not that I think he would not wish to see the odious restrictions done away, which still render us the objects of public ill will. I am sure he is an enemy to persecution and intolerance, and would not frown on our most complete emancipation. However, from some cause or other—either from prejudice,—for prejudice, I have just before observed, will grow in the same mind in which humanity blooms; or from the ignorance of our principles,—for the ignorance of our principles is often united with the most enlightened knowledge of other objects;—or from a general dislike of any system which imposes restraints upon the evagations of reason—for he has often been accused of leaning to the maxims of latitudinarianism;—or from—he treats popery with the most marked contempt, and invokes upon it every hateful execration which wisdom usually teems on folly. The chief weapon with which he combats it is ridicule. I have not by me, at pre-

sent, any of the doctor's writings. I have only a few extracts, which I find, by accident, entered upon my papers, as a specimen of his mode of treating us. The extract which I here present, is of a piece with many others, and points out, as well as twenty other quotations would do it, the temper, in our regard, of the great polemic.

In one of his letters to Gibbon, citing the words of St. Paul to Timothy, as proof that the apostles had not predicted the early return of Christ, he says---"*You have here an express prophecy---in which you may discover the erroneous tenets, or the demon or Saint Worship of the church of Rome---Through the hypocrisy of liars, you recognize, no doubt, the priesthood and the Martyrologists. Having their consciences seared with a red hot iron; callous indeed, must be his conscience, who traffics in indulgences. Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats; this language needs no pressing, it discovers, at once, the unhappy votaries of monastic life, and the mortal sin of eating flesh meat on fast days.*"

I have too high an opinion of Dr. W's judgment to believe, that he could possibly have intended the above glossary to be a serious elucidation of the text of the apostle. I conceive it an attempt at wit, in order to enliven the awful dryness of the subject which he was discussing:

The doctor, doubtless, was in sportive fit,
And had no other play place for his wit.

Before I presume to make any observations on the passage, I will here—though the circumstance should form the subject of a lengthened note—enter my protest against the use of ridicule on so serious a subject as religion.—Ridicule, certainly, does not become it. It is, generally speaking, what Rousseau calls “*la raison des sots*,” and generally speaking, too, a concession of the weakness of the cause, which is reduced to use it, calculated not to persuade, but to give offence; not to amuse the wise, but to excite disgust; it is equally repugnant to good sense, as it is opposed to good breeding and good taste. A great mind seldom uses it, a good heart hardly ever: and when they use it, it is to throw light upon the subject which they treat, never, wantonly, to cast insult upon the men, whom they are labouring—or, at least, should labour—to persuade.

If, indeed, wisdom were common in the paths of life, or if the great herd of our protestant countrymen were under the control of moderation, so far from objecting to the use of ridicule against our principles, or our conduct, I should on the contrary, rejoice at the circumstance. Then, reasoning, as wisdom and moderation reason, men would suspect the cause and disesteem the writers, that employed it; and, as for the catholic, so far from respecting him the less, they would even revere him the more. Unfortunately, however, such is not the

case; because, unfortunately for the cause of truth and for us, neither wisdom nor moderation are common in the walks of society, in regard of popery. Hence, does the ridicule, which some writers cast upon our religion, produce serious mischiefs to its professors. Addressed to ignorance, to passion, to prejudice and fanaticism, it becomes the nurse of misconception, and the parent of animosity. It stays multitudes from the investigation of our doctrines, and makes some ashamed to profess them. Ridicule is, certainly, the most powerful and the most mischievous instrument, which the protestant employs against us, as it is the most successful and powerful engine that impiety uses against revelation. The case is, ridicule makes truth appear absurd; and, therefore, not only undeserving notice, but beneath notice,—not only an object of disesteem, but an object of contempt. I need not say what is the effect of contempt, when thus unhappily generated. Its influences are even more powerful than dislike, than antipathy, or hatred; for while the mind will often reconcile itself to study, or pursue what it dislikes, or even hates, it will never be reconciled to investigate, or embrace what it has been taught to believe is too foolish to merit notice. And yet it is by ridicule unseasoned with wit, by irony devoid of humour, by insults, which have not the meagre merit of being satirical, that

our adversaries, in general, combat popery and its professors.

Dr. W. knows, perfectly, the tyrant power of ridicule—he knows, perfectly, that as Boileau says,

Un bon mot, en ce siecle, est un fort argument;

And, accordingly, although his talents are no more formed for wit, than his temper is formed for malevolence, he tries, very frequently, the powers of ridicule upon the hated tenets of popery. To wit I have even less pretensions than Dr. W. and therefore---particularly too, as I am reprobating the use of ridicule---would not attempt to cast ridicule upon the passage which I have just quoted from his lordship's letters. Great wit might do it easily, I think, with great effect. However, without aiming either at wit, or designing to employ ridicule, I will just point out how easy it is to detect false wit, false logic, and false maxims, in the insults of our adversaries; and for this purpose, pause a few moments upon the doctor's words.

Having quoted the texts of the apostle, he proceeds to his glossary or elucidation of them.—“Here,” he says, “you have an *express* prophecy:” as if prophecies were not usually express—“a prophecy, in which you discover the erroneous tenets, and demon worship of the church of Rome.” This is, probably, the circumstance which renders it so peculiarly *express* to the mind

of Dr. W.—it is an odious prophecy against somebody; and therefore it is an *express* prophecy against the papists;—it alludes to some erroneous tenets or other, and therefore it *expressly* alludes to those of popery—it attaches to heretics, who worship demons, and, therefore, it *expressly* attaches to papists, who do not worship demons. All this, no doubt, is perfectly *express*, and the penetration of Mr. Gibbon, like that of Dr. W. “*discovered it at once*,” although such discovery had never been made before.

“*Through the hypocrisy of liars, you recognise, no doubt, the priesthood and the martyrologists.*” This, too, is again “*express*.” Here, you “*discover no doubt* :”—and what? that the priesthood and the martyrologists are hypocrites and liars. And is not then Bishop W. a priest? Or had he forgotten that he ought, at least, to pretend to the honor of belonging to that sacred order? Did not the apostles too, belong to the priesthood, and above half those illustrious characters, who, in each revolving age, were the ornaments of the periods, and of the countries, in which they lived—in the earlier ages, the Chrysostoms and the Austins---in later ages, the Saleses and the Xaviers---nearly in our own age, the Fenelons and the Bossuets ---and, but yesterday, the heroes, who, in the French revolution, shed their blood for Jesus Christ—did not these belong to the priesthood?

As for "the martyrologists," these, too, were a portion of the priesthood, and like it, comprehend some of the best and greatest men who adorn the annals of the church. And yet, are all these to the philosophy of Dr. W. or to his system of morals, "hypocrites and liars!" Doctor, for shame! But the case is, the prophecy "*expressly*" alludes to hypocrites and liars, and therefore, it "*expressly*" alludes to papists. This, certainly, is *exceedingly express*.

"*Having their conscience seared with a red hot iron: callous indeed, must be his conscience, who traffics in indulgences.*" Is, then, the traffic in indulgences so very cruel, and so dreadful a transaction? Surely, an indulgence must be, of course, not what the term itself would seem to signify---an indulgence, or a favour---but a pain, or punishment. And what is, really, an indulgence? Precisely, a release from temporal pain or punishment. And the traffic in the release from punishment requires a callous heart. Doctor, where is your logic? But, the apostle, once more, alludes to something odious; and therefore, he alludes to popery---he alludes to men, whose consciences were impervious to the influences of grace, and of course, he alludes to papists. *This is "express."*

"*Callous indeed must be his conscience, who traffics in indulgences.*" Admitting, that such traffic were cruel, as the doctor makes it, yet is he correct

in his assertion, that the papists does, really, carry it on? For my own part, I do not believe, that in the catholic universe there is one place where the mart is open to so singular an article of commerce, as what protestant writers generally mean by an indulgence,—not one catholic individual, who ever purchased the useful, but strange, commodity. It is indeed, too true, that a few interested or bigoted men have, on different occasions, abused the benefit of indulgences. But it is also true, that the church censured the abuses—true, that no catholic prelate carries on the iniquitous traffic—true, that no catholic divine teaches its propriety.—No matter; the prophecy applies to “hypocrites and liars,” and therefore, it applies to papists. *This is “express,”—this, “you recognize, no doubt.”*

“Forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats. This language needs no pressing; it discovers, at once, the unhappy votaries of monastic life.” It is here the doctor should have called the papist “callous, and seared with a red hot iron.” Forbidding to marry! No doubt, this is cruel, in the extreme.—And does the catholic church “forbid to marry?” Why, she even considers matrimony as a sacrament.—But, she forbids her priests to marry? Yes, but then she obliges none to become priests. Her priests all left, completely, to their own choice, voluntarily, after they have attained the age of discretion, think proper to vow

celibacy. Therefore, all that the church forbids is merely this, that the men who have made vows, shall not break their vows. She only enforces or watches over the observance of this injunction of the Almighty: *if any man shall make a vow to the Lord, he shall fulfil all he had promised.* (Num. xxx. 3.) Why; even the established church of this humane and enlightened nation forbids many of its members to enter into the state of matrimony.—But, the apostle speaks of heretics, who forbid the use of marriage, and therefore, he speaks of papists, who do not forbid it. *“This language needs no pressing.”*

“And the mortal sin of eating flesh meat upon fast days!” And yet the protestant doctrine respecting the use of flesh meat, is precisely the same as the catholic! Equally, with the catholic, the protestant conceives, that in conformity with the injunctions of our great Redeemer, mortification should constitute a part of the christian character—and mortification, he again conceives in conformity to the example of his sacred model, of his apostles, and the saints, is cultivated by the observance of abstinence and fasting. Hence, does the Common Prayer Book and the Book of Homilies, ordain and recommend abstinence and fasting, precisely in the same manner, and even upon the same days precisely with the catholic church. Therefore, if the protestant consider the ordinances of the protestant

church equally binding as the catholic considers the injunctions of the catholic church, then is he equally bound, as is the catholic, to abstain from the use of flesh meat; and if the violation of the laws of his church be, really, "a mortal sin," then too, if he eat it on a fast-day, he is, like the catholic, guilty of a mortal sin. In both cases, the sin is merely the act of disobedience, and the want of mortification. As for the flesh meat itself, the catholic considers it just as harmless upon one day, as upon another. He eats it five days in the week; he eats it when sick every day; and every day the church allows it, when the health of an individual makes it necessary. The only difference, which I know, between the protestant and the papist, in regard of flesh meat, is this, that while both profess exactly the same doctrines, the papist observes what he professes, the protestant does not.---But in short, ---and this is the last instance, which I shall give of Dr. W.'s logic,---the apostle refers to men, who considered flesh meat as sinful, and proceeding from the evil principle; the catholic considers it as completely inoffensive and the gift of the divine beneficence, and therefore, the doctor concludes the apostle refers to catholics:---he speaks of heretics, who taught doctrines directly opposed to those of catholics, and therefore, he speaks of catholics. "*This language needs no pressing.*" No, certainly, the prophecy is perfectly "*express,*" and its appli-

cation to the doctrines of popery, to which it has no relation whatever, is just as express, as the prophecy itself.

I will conclude, with merely this piece of advice to Dr. W.

. . . Tolle jocos, non est jocus esse malignum,
Nunquam sunt grati, qui nocuère sales.

There is, too, an old French proverb, which though by no means verified in Dr. W. is very generally found correct; *diseur de bons mots, mauvais caractere*. The man, generally speaking, who will sport with truth, or with the reputation of his neighbour, for the pleasure of appearing witty, is an odious character. From this imputation, I, from my heart, absolve Dr. W. Only, I recommend the proverb to his observation. And I recommend to him, too, when next he gratifies the public with his writings, that should aught induce him to speak of popery, he would substitute reason in the room of wit, and liberality and candor in the place of prejudice and derision. I recommend to him, before he next attacks our doctrines, to learn what our doctrines are. The consequence will be, that he will speak of them, if not with veneration, at least with civility and respect.

Dr. P. (now Dr. I.)

The Theological Elements of Dr. P.—particularly the first volume, have considerable claims to the public esteem. On the subject of popery, they are less intemperate far, than many other publications. I dare say, their author is less illiberal than the generality of his associates in the sacred ministry. Still, there are in his elements some shades of prejudice on the subject of popery, some occasional expressions of ill-will, a few strokes of satire, and accidental misrepresentations, which do not entirely accord either with the character and idea of the completely liberal man, or with the reputation and notion of the perfectly learned and candid scholar. To give merely one or two specimens of these, only occasional, inadvertencies: "*The popes,*" he says (vol. 2d) "*did not scruple to call indulgences a plenary remission of all sins, past, present, and future.*"

"*In process of time, the clergy gained such an ascendancy over the minds of the people, as to persuade them it was their duty to confess all their sins to a priest; and then, to give a greater sanction to this delusion, they called it a sacrament.*"

"*They (the catholics) contend, that the mere receiving the Lord's supper procures remission of sins, as it were, mechanically, whatever may be the character and disposition of the communicant.*" (vol. 2d.)

“Ordination was raised to a sacrament, for the purpose of raising the importance of the clerical character in the eyes of the people, and of promoting the influence of the Roman Pontiffs.” (vol. 2d.)

On the subject of our tenets respecting images and relics, the doctor asserts, with all the intrepidity of ignorance—for I suppose it ignorance only—that *the worship of the former is one of our established doctrines, and that the absolute worship of the latter is preached by the church as a christian duty, and authorized by the council of Trent.*

THE LATE DR. HURD.

I offer the same apology for impeaching the liberality of this illustrious character, which I did for censuring that of the late Dr. P. His works still live; and, like those of Dr. P. live to attest, that great minds have often great prejudices, and great weaknesses. Doctor H., with all his good nature, frequently derides popery; and with all his learning, often misrepresents it. I present only two quotations from his learned *Introduction to the Prophecies*—which, I suspect, was a most powerful recommendation to his *Introduction to a bishopric*.

The church of Rome applies to the saints, directly, as saviours; for their proper and immediate help, and expects it, from the supposed privileges of their rank and merits, independently of their prayers.”
—“*These prayers,*” the good man adds, “*are pre-*

ferred with all the circumstances and formalities of divine worship." And hence, he infers, by a conclusion, which is perfectly correct, if his premises were so too, that "*the catholic mode of intercession is unchristian and idolatrous.*"

On the subject of the papal Antichrist, if Dr. H. really believed what he has written, he possessed the most anile credulity—if he disbelieved it, he possessed the most unpardonable illiberality. On this odious subject, having with infinite industry first raked together, and then disposed in formidable array all the nonsense which Mede and Newton, &c. &c. had collected and combined, in order to prove that the popes are Antichrist—he thus concludes—for, it would be endless to quote his proofs—that his arguments "*furnish, if not an ABSOLUTE DEMONSTRATION, at least a high degree of probability, that apostate Papal Rome is the VERY antichrist foretold.*"

Thus, without selecting my vouchers from the least learned, or the least respectable members of the clergy—but on the contrary, from those who possess the largest share of the public veneration—I have proved, I think, what I had advanced in the preface of this illustration—that the most enlightened portion of this nation, and which from religious principles, should be also the most liberal, is illiberal in regard of catholics. I close my note with merely this prayer:—May the auspicious day soon

beam upon us, which may put an end to this war of insult upon truth and charity—a war, which no hostility in the catholic, but mere misconception in the protestant provokes, *bellum sine hoste*—a war, which presents no well-earned laurel to the combatant.

Let us, now, no more contend, nor blame
Each other; blam'd enough elsewhere; but strive
In offices of love, how we may lighten
Each other's evils, in our share of woe.

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Illiberality of protestant writers.

After the proofs, which I produced in the preceding illustration, that even the best educated and the most respectable members of the prelacy are, in their writings, guilty of gross illiberality, on the subject of popery—it should hardly appear necessary for me to shew, that the same kind of illiberality—and often, indeed, much grosser—pervades the compositions of the subordinate clergy, and after them, of every other class of writers, from the angry polemic, down to the meanest poetaster—through the medium of historians, geographers, travellers, pamphleteers, and the paltry scribblers of novels and romances. With very few exceptions,

whatever be the object of any work, if by design or accident, it introduces the subject of popery and the papist, it is to misrepresent or vilify them. The thing is so notorious, that I entertain no apprehension of being contradicted in the assertion, by whoever is but tolerably conversant in English literature. Among our writers to insult popery is a matter of course; *c'est la fable convenue*.

It would, consequently, be useless to crowd the pages of this illustration with the evidences of this illiberality; as too it would be almost equally useless to swell it with censures or reflections upon *the generality* of the writers, who are guilty of it. The generality of them consists of men without the slightest pretensions to erudition, and with very slight pretensions to talents, who knowing that the public taste is best gratified, on the subject of popery, with lies and nonsense, write to gratify the public taste—in order, as a means of securing approbation, and for the more substantial purposes of profit, to give circulation to their works. I will not attempt to class this host of scribblers. Very large portions of them, if reduced to classes, would consist of witlings and buffoons, but the largest—if they really believe all that they assert—of fools, and dunces. Contempt is the proper feeling for such writers, as silence is the proper answer to their writings.

For who would break a fly upon a wheel?

But, amid this multitude of our adversaries, were I to assert, that all merit the reproach of possessing slender talents or trifling erudition, I should be very incorrect indeed. Among them, there are men who possess talents and erudition, that are measured to the extent, almost, and greatness of every subject—acuteness to discern with precision, judgment to reason with accuracy, and all the riches of learning to adorn the subjects which they treat. To these acquirements, too, they add the kind of eloquence, which is calculated to persuade, and the charms of language, which give to persuasion fresh conviction. Enemies such as these—and we have such enemies—are formidable, if mischievously employed in exerting the influence of their great acquirements in keeping alive the public prejudices against us. We own this evil, and lament the injuries, which it, eventually, has produced. Still, it is not the influence of the great mental and literary acquirements of these gentlemen, exerted even to their utmost bearings, that we, principally, apprehend—it is the influences of these, not as it results from *these*, but as it results from the features of their private, or the splendor of their public characters. It is the *men*, more than the writers, that we dread—the amiable qualities, which eminently distinguish some of them. Their generosity and affability in private life, and their

modesty and moral virtues in public life, give, far more, than their learning and abilities, a sanction to what they write, and insure belief to what they preach. By these they accredit their falsehood respecting popery, and the nonsense and illiberality, which they prodigally teem out upon its professors. The author and the preacher are believed on account of the real or supposed virtues of the man: and the public cheated by his authority,—piously conceiving, that he is incapable of asserting what is false, or of encouraging animosity without a cause,—with stupid credulity, believes, upon his attestation, the veriest fictions; and warmed by his indignation, with sanctified animosity, entertains the most uncharitable antipathies.

For, in reality, although I have given to this class of our antagonists learning and great abilities, yet it is not upon the question of our religion, that they display them wisely. Dupes, nearly all of them, either to the prejudices which they had in their childhood, imbibed from their nurses, or to the prejudices and interests of their subsequent education and pursuits, they possess—to judge from their works—as false and imperfect notions of our religion, as the most ignorant; and like the most ignorant, combat our religion in a manner the most illiberal. I refer the reader to their works and discourses. Let him consult, in either of them, the description of our religion. Nothing can be

more false and incorrect. Our religion, there, is the creature of their own fancies---a visionary thing made up of errors, which we reprobate, of maxims, which we abhor, and of abuses, which we condemn. Of these, they compose a hideous spectre, which, with "asservation blustering in their face," they solemnly declare the catholic adores: and against this, with pious consistency, they hurl all the indignation of their eloquence.---It would not be an apt comparison, if I were to compare these gentlemen to the ancient sorcerers, whom our historians represent animated with anger, and seeking to take vengeance on their enemies. These men, they tell us, used to make up a horrible figure in wax of the person who either had offended them, or whom, for any other cause, they wished to injure or destroy. Having completed it, they then, amidst frightful incantations, curses and execrations, mutilated, or inflicted the deepest wounds upon it, conceiving that each mutilation or wound inflicted upon the image, fell really upon the person whom the image represented.---It is well that all the enemies of popery are not great conjurors. But such, precisely, is the manner in which they treat us. Dressing up a grotesque figure, distorted and ludicrous in every feature, they teem upon it all the malevolence of their prejudices, and wantonly stabbing it, flatter themselves in their folly, that they have given a

wound to catholicity itself. Absurd magicians! Would only the vulgar had eyes to discover the absurdity! Neither the phantom resembles our religion, nor do the wounds which they inflict upon it, reach our religion. They do, indeed, a serious injury, sometimes, to its professors, because they deprive us, sometimes, of that respect which is due to us as citizens, and contribute to withhold from us those rights, which are equally due to us, as subjects. Had the protestant, who has suffered his reason to be scared by these monstrous exhibitions, but the wisdom to doubt of their reality, or the courage to strip them of their visor, not only would he blush at his own weakness, for having been terrified without a cause, he would loudly censure the men who had cheated him into the preposterous apprehension.—Let me then just seriously caution the protestant not to judge of our religion by the portraits which he finds given of it by protestant writers. Their descriptions are caricatures.

DOCTOR RENNEL.

If I were asked, to whom I would give the exalted pre-eminence of insulting popery, with most effect, I should not have much hesitation in saying, it is Dr. R. I think him the spirit, which, in the lower regions at least, has guided and given direc-

tions to the storms and whirlwinds, which have assailed us in the roughest manner. Possessed of many of those influences, which give effect to talents, and of talents, which give effect to zeal, he employs these with wanton animosity against us. I shall not attempt to give the portrait of Dr. R. He is admired by nearly all the admirers of learning; and his works have been read by nearly all the lovers of eloquence. It would hardly be a sufficient tribute to his erudition, if I were to say of him,

Rhetora, grammaticum, polyhistora, *teque poetam!*

Qui negat, is lippus, luscus, obesus, iners.

As for his knowledge of the languages, the Pursuits of Literature (if they be his) must appear to the vulgar, the greatest proof almost of extraordinary proficiency, and to the pedant the most luxurious treat which a century has supplied.

He Greek and Latin writes with greater ease,
Than hogs eat acorns, and tame pigeons pease.

HUB.

But it is his eloquence which I most admire, and which alone the catholic has reason to apprehend. The doctor is certainly eloquent. There are passages in his discourses, which not my prejudice nor hostility—if I had any against the man—would hinder me from admiring in the writer.

It is not mine to guess, much less to pretend to say, what may have been the motive—time will unfold that mystery---why the doctor has, for some years past, aimed the chief thunder of his eloquence at popery. There was a time, when equally well informed respecting our religion as he is at present, he not only entertained a great veneration for it, but excited by the publicity of his veneration, the censure of the protestant public. Of late, not only has this veneration vanished, but it has been superseded by a measure of animosity, unequalled almost in the annals of modern violence. A complete convert from the esteem for popery, to the warmer esteem, I suppose, of protestantism, he appears now, in regard of the former

A man, whose chief devotion lies,
In odd, perverse antipathies.
His head brim full of fears and fictions,
His conscience formed of contradictions.

Most certainly, if the severity of censure and the intemperance of the abuse of popery be designed as an atonement of his former respect for it, he has expiated his error "with a witness." I shall give only an extract or two from his discourses. The passages in the Pursuits of Literature, which regard us, although they cede not in illiberality to many which occur in the discourses, are yet inferior to them in energy and point. They are rather petu-

lant than energetic; and peevish, rather than pointed. They are sometimes even trifling, puerile, and laughable,---monuments which do no credit to his wisdom, his learning, his ability, or his heart.

Speaking of the introduction of the reformation, he says, "When Almighty God in the depth of his merciful decrees, was pleased to dissipate the long dark night of papal superstition; to burst those bonds of cruelty, persecution, ignorance, and superstition, which had, for a long succession of ages triumphed over learning, piety, and even the common feelings of natural humanity—he gifted his chosen instruments, Luther and Calvin, with qualities proportioned to the high task assigned them."

"It was," he says, "the cruelty, absurdity, bigotry, and wide extent of popery, that generated the atheism, to which it is, constantly, allied, and perfectly congenial."

DR. ZOUCH.

Dr. Z. is very well known in the walks of literature, although he is not considered as a very distinguished ornament of those walks. His first entrance into them was in the capacity of interpreter of the prophets—or rather, in the double capacity of interpreter of the prophets, and sometimes of a prophet himself. Animated probably by a zeal for protestantism (and possibly by the zeal for some-

thing else,) and conceiving, as he tells us, "*that protestantism receives its strongest support, or rather derives its original foundation from the prophecies concerning antichrist,*" he with great heroism marshals in formidable array, the long dreadful series of proofs, which a host of bigots had, before, employed, to make it evident, that "our popes are antichrist, and that popery is the antichristian superstition pointed out by the sacred writers." From a mind like the Doctor's, warmed with the love of protestantism, and convinced that protestantism receives its "*best support*" from the proofs of these two frightful, but important, theses, it is easy to imagine, what must be the industry of his ingenuity in establishing them, and what the fire and indignation of his zeal in reprobating the odious system, which he combats. I will merely say, that his work is an excellent attestation of that illiberality, which I have attributed to protestant writers. (Let it here be recollected, that I am speaking only of the illiberality of the *writer*; for in all the transactions of private life, I believe, that Dr. Z. is a very liberal and amiable man.

From the specimen which I here present of the doctor's interpretation of the law of charity in our regard, the reader may judge what must be his sentiments and language, when he feels and speaks of popery and of papists, in his anger. "*Without violating,*" kind, gentle man! "*without violating*

the laws of charity, a serious protestant MUST," he says, "*consider the members of the church of Rome as professors of a religion perfectly abhorrent from the purity of the gospel; as involved in idolatrous and superstitious practices; as men who have not repented of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and wood; neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.*"

The following extracts may serve as illustrations of the doctor's various acquirements—of his learning; *the cross is an object of adoration, and is petitioned to give increase of grace to the righteous and pardon to the guilty:*"—of his piety—"when I see a devotee bending the knee, uplifting the hands and eyes before the figure of the cross, and before the figure of a female trampling a half moon under her feet, I turn from the sight with trepidation and horror;"—of his charity, learning, piety, and candor all together—"Whilst we see the present people of Rome, worshipping, this day, in the same temples, at the same altars, sometimes the same images, and always with the same ceremonies, as the old Romans, they must have more charity, as well as skill, in distinguishing than I pretend to, who can absolve them from the same crime of superstition and idolatry, with their pagan ancestors."

But, as it would far exceed the limits which I have marked out for these illustrations, to accom-

pany my extracts with reflections, I shall only henceforth present, without any comment or observation, a few quotations from the works of a small number of other writers, who have acquired a considerable degree of reputation in the walks of life—a reputation, which, although they be men of abilities, they owe less to their abilities than to their violence, and less to the merits of their writings than to the public prejudice. A sentence or two from each of them will point out the spirit of the writers, as well, I have observed before, as a multiplicity of paragraphs.

DEAN SPARKE.

“While the papists look upon all those as heretics, and devoted to eternal torments, who are not within the pale of their church—while they arrogate to themselves an universal dominion even over potentates themselves—while they publicly profess that no faith should be kept with heretics—while we see all these horrible tenets have proceeded and still proceed from that antichrist, what dangers ought we to believe hang over us, if we allow the papists any participation in the government?”

Sermon preached at the Synod of Canterbury: an. 1807.

JORTIN.

“It should seem impossible for a man of letters, a man versed in ecclesiastical history, and in the

scriptures, a man of probity, and good sense to admit the pope's spiritual supremacy, the celebration of the eucharist in one kind, transubstantiation, celibacy imposed upon the clergy, the worship of images and reliques, the miracles ascribed to impostors, fanatics and lunatics, and a multitude of other things so contrary to religion and common sense." Rem. on Eccl. Hist. But, let the reader consult his sermons. The above sentences are all mildness compared to what he, there, incessantly and emphatically asserts.*

WRANGHAM.

"*Rome is fallen.* I rejoice to see the sovereign pontiff, who once trod upon the neck of royalty, crouching himself beneath the insolent foot of a ferocious and implacable republic. . . I spare you the afflictive recital of their massacres and their inquisitions, their dispensing with the performance of indispensable duties, and their selling pardons for unpardonable crimes. I stop not to inveigh against their doctrines of devils, and their assumption of more than human powers. . . I quit the contemplation of this combination of hypocrisy and superstition, of idolatry and blasphemy."---*Visitation sermon.*

* Of Jortin, Dr. Parr says, "He seems to consider any improvement in the sentiments of catholics, as a *moral impossibility*, and any relaxation of the laws enacted against them in this country as a dangerous experiment.

LE MESURIER.

“The truth is—the distinguishing part of the Romish religion is such an insult upon common sense, that it will not bear examination. The members of that communion are forbidden to think or speak of their faith, but as they are commanded. Tied down to the weak and beggarly elements, a Roman catholic has neither inclination nor capacity for the pure worship of the spirit. To him religion always appears in the garb of slavery, and he naturally feels the wish to get rid of the shackles which she imposes on him; but worldly considerations or prejudices interpose. . . To grant them what they call emancipation would be, in fact, only to rivet the fetters of the laity: it would be to encourage ignorance, and extend the reign of superstition, of infidelity, and of immorality.”—

Sequel of the Serious Examin.

DR. WHITAKER.

“They (the Waldenses, &c.) were compelled to separate from the Church of Rome, because it was idolatrous.—Every clear-headed peasant could understand the absurdity of transubstantiation, and every one who had learned the commandments, knew what to think of the worship of images.”—

Sermon preached at Salisbury, an. 1807.

DR. KIPLING.

“Ask one of this species of beings why he believes transubstantiation, his reply will be, “I believe this, BECAUSE it is impossible.” Impossibility is no obstacle to his faith. On the contrary, to believe what is impossible, he judges to be an act of superlative faith and piety, and to disbelieve it because it is impossible, would be in his opinion impiously to question the omnipotence of the Deity.”
—*Examination of certain accusations brought recently by Irish papists, &c.* 1809.

The above, though few, are sufficient proofs or specimens of the temper of the gentlemen whom I have cited, in their delineations of popery. The reader will have remarked, that so far from having selected them from the writings of men of no character, or reputation,—so far from having culled them from works, which the public contempt has, long since, consigned to oblivion and the worms, I have on the contrary, extracted all of them from the works of men, whose literary and moral characters are, if not distinguished, at least deservedly respectable in society. But, not only are the above extracts the attestations of the temper of the writers who composed them, they are specimens also of the similar temper which pervades and animates the writings and discourses of the

whole host of equally respectable characters that combat popery.* Sorry I am to say it—with very trifling differences of shade and difference of violence, this host of men are all alike—all illiberal, apparently ignorant of our principles, uncandid and intemperate.—I will not present any quotations to prove the spirit and temper of the *less respectable* portions of the protestant community—of the more ignorant yet, and more unpolished. I shall not be accused of deducing an unlogical inference, if I say, that if the former are so grossly illiberal, the latter are, at least, equally illiberal. The fact is, they are equally illiberal, but their illiberality is so coarse, so vulgar, so extremely illiberal, that I will not stain the pages of this illustration with the foul attestations of it.

Keen is the war, where dulness draws the sword.

* Stern used to call the abuse of popery his *Cheshire Cheese*. “Just,” he said, “as when we have little to eat, or little to give away, I have always recourse to my *Cheshire Cheese*, just so do I act, when I have little to say, or little to give my people—I have recourse to the abuse of popery.—Hence, I call it my *Cheshire Cheese*. It has a two-fold advantage; it costs me very little, and I find, by experience, that nothing satisfies so well the hungry appetites of my congregation. They always devour it greedily, and return home gratified with the repast, and extolling the liberality of the donor!”

To the writers then, whom I have quoted, and to all those who imitate them in the illiberality of their works or sermons, I will just take the liberty to say:—Gentlemen, we do not blame you for the zeal with which you defend the religion that you profess—we do not even blame you for attacking ours. So far from reproaching you, for the severity with which you, censure the *real* abuses, the scandals, or superstitions, which may have stolen into our great establishment, we thank you for your zeal in doing it, because it is our wish, as it is evidently the wish of religion, that these evils should be corrected. We do not deny the existence of abuses in our church, we do not even deny that abuses are not common; because where weakness and vice are common, abuses follow them, as their too easy and too natural appendages. Therefore, again, censure these, and display against them, if you please, all the energies of your eloquence. It is employing eloquence nobly—it is doing what we ourselves do frequently, and what the spirit of our church desires.—We most cordially wish that success may await your efforts, and that the exertions of your industry may have the happy effect of scaring vice from the haunts of our society, and making the bigot, and the fanatic, and the superstitious, ashamed of their excesses.—But, it is here that we blame you—we blame you, that not distinguishing our religion from its abuses,

nor the approved practices of the church from the extravagances of a few individuals, you attribute to our religion what she equally reprobates with you, and to the church what forms the subject of her incessant censures: we blame you for your extreme ignorance of our tenets, for the infidelity of your imputations, for the illiberality of your reproaches, and for the immoderation of your insults. The assertion is not a hazarded one—in all these points, you violate, in our regard, the laws of justice and decorum.

Whoever undertakes to direct the opinion of the public, and to censure the principles of any portion of society, is bound in decency, as well as justice, to understand the principles which he condemns, and to be assured too that they are really the principles of the men to whom he imputes them. You are the directors of the public opinion in regard of our religion; and, therefore, it is evidently your duty, before you reprobate it, to know the doctrines which it teaches. Knowledge is the basis of all equitable censure, and even of all wise opinion. And deciding upon the equity and wisdom of your censures and opinion of our religion, from the knowledge which you possess, or seem to possess of it in your writings and discourses, I have no hesitation in saying, that you are ignorant—I could almost say childishly ignorant—of its doctrines. Not giving yourselves the

trouble to study it, in the mediums where alone it is accurately described—in catholic writers—you study it in the angry and prejudiced productions of its enemies—of men, who like yourselves, either knew it not, or misrepresented it. The consequence is, that you do not know it—and the consequence of your ignorance is, that you represent it incorrectly. Your representations of it are no more its real portrait, than the representation of a monster is the portrait of beauty. As exhibited by you, our religion is indeed, a monster:—but, happily, a monster existing only in your own prejudices, and in the illusions of your own imaginations.

The next quality which equity and wisdom require in religious writers, after knowing well the principles which they treat—is, that they judge of them without partiality, and discuss them without passion. Animated merely by the desire and love of truth, the virtuous man carries with him into its investigation that kind of spirit, which alone is congenial to the nature of truth—coolness, impartiality, and piety; and having by these methods ascertained, or supposed that he has ascertained, its possession, he—still animated by the same impulse which had led him to its investigation—explains it with mildness, sincerity, and benevolence. Nothing certainly, is more repugnant to the maxims of religion, than prejudice in its in-

vestigation, and passion in its discussion. And, yet again—again grounding my assertion upon the attestation of your writings—it is true, that as you are ignorant of our religion, so do you investigate it under the influences of prejudice, and discuss it with intemperance. In the annals of prejudice and intemperance, there is, hardly, aught more illiberal and violent, than your invectives against popery.—Yes, and suppose even that it were true, that you alone are the exclusive proprietors of the truth—were it true that popery is the absurd object, or the papist the idolatrous being that you make him, yet would not even this suffice to justify the intemperance with which you treat them. As for the absurdities which we profess, or the idolatry which we cultivate—did we profess or cultivate either—these would be injurious to ourselves alone, or alone be displeasing to the God of truth: and, therefore, it is religion alone, and the God of truth, that have reason to be offended with us. And you, of course, if you be the agents of religion, and the representatives of the God of truth, you should, in those capacities, reproach us, or instruct us, or enlighten us, in the temper of religion, and in the spirit of truth—in charity, wisdom, and benevolence. It is true, there is a warmth, there is even a virtuous indignation, sometimes, in religious zeal; but then these are always regulated by the rules of truth and the laws of

charity. Be therefore warm and indignant as you please, only be warm and indignant with knowledge, with candor, with temperance, and justice. It is not warmth, but the injustice of warmth that we shrink from. Hence, instructed in the first place, in our tenets, before you presume to instruct the public, and fired with zeal enkindled at the altar of charity, hold out to us the torch of evidence, and the attestations of wisdom; and press these, calmly and candidly, upon our reason. It is thus you will best defend the cause of religion—best convince the catholic, if he is to be convinced of the errors of catholicity; and best enlighten the protestant, if he is to be enlightened of the truth of protestantism. Insult can but serve to alienate the affections of the catholic, when it injures; and should serve to convince the protestant of the badness of the cause, which needs so bad an auxiliary for its support.

To my countrymen in general, who borrow their ideas of popery from the writings and discourses of their protestant pastors, I could say much upon the subject of their credulity and prejudices. But, I will merely say to them: believe them not. In believing them, you become the dupes of men, who themselves are the dupes of ignorance, or passion, or bigotry, or interest. Their portraits of our religion are false.—Or if indeed you will believe them, let it be as justice bids you, in every

either case of impeachment,—let it be, after you have confronted the accusers with the accused, and prudently ascertained that their assertions repose, if not on truth, at least on probability. Beware too—and this is another maxim which your good sense observes in the ordinary transactions of life—beware of violence and insult. Truth needs them not, and religion reprobates them. It would be wise to suspect the veracity of the men who employ them. But should you wish, really, to know our religion, it is—and the thing is natural—from catholic writers you must derive that knowledge. As they know it best, they best explain its doctrines; and, surely, were it only to ascertain whether they be those blasphemous, idolatrous, and horrid things, which you are taught to consider them, even your curiosity should urge you to such investigation.—At all events, whether you consult catholic or protestant writers concerning catholic tenets, let candor, and charity, and liberality be your guides. In the formation too of any judgment of our religion, take always this precaution with you—to distinguish between what constitutes a part of the religion, and what is only an accidental appendage to it—between its abuses and the practices which it approves. And remember well, that what forms our religion, is our tenets. Should your wisdom conduct the investigation of our religion upon these principles, you would soon be

induced to conclude, that it is, indeed, an extremely different object from what your credulity had conceived it, and that the men, whose violence and misrepresentations had seduced your reason to believe their falsehoods, are but literary gladiators attempting to assassinate it, or religious caricaturists distorting its beauteous features.

(C) PAGE 35.

The English church differs from all other reformed churches.

“Our articles and liturgy,” says Dr. Pretyman, (now Tomlin) “do not correspond with the sentiments of any of the reformers upon the continent, or with the creeds of any of the protestant churches which are there established. Our church is not Lutheran—it is not Calvinistic—it is not Arminian—it is scriptural.”

Charge to the clergy of Lincoln, 1803.

I will not here suggest to the reason of the reader, the reflections which the above passage is calculated to excite, nor will I, as the advocate of the insulted Lutherans, Calvinists, and Arminians, present any serious expostulation on its import.

“*The English church*,” his lordship says, “*is scriptural*,” as if the Lutheran, Calvinistic, and

Arminian churches did not, equally, call themselves “scriptural;” and as if they had not the same claims to that important title. It is the very claim on which they all establish, as they imagine, the supposed divinity of their respective institutions.

“*The English church is scriptural ;*” of course, according to his lordship’s logic, or his lordship’s theology, the English church is, alone, the true church ; it alone is the catholic, or universal church. If it be alone the true church, what a world of unfortunate beings do his orthodoxy and his charity exclude from its sacred pale; and consequently, from the seats of future happiness! If it be alone the universal church, to what a frightful narrow compass does he reduce or contract it! The universal church reduced to the “scriptural” establishment of this little island! And, as only a certain portion of its inhabitants belong to this “scriptural” establishment,—the universal church reduced to a small portion of the few inhabitants of a little island

(D) PAGE 35.

The disunity of the protestant church.

The following outlines of the confusion which grew out of the principles of protestantism, are taken from the work of one of the warmest ad-

mirers and most zealous defenders of that heresy—the celebrated *Ecclesiastical and Political History* of Hornius. It is indeed a mere etching of this confusion, presenting very imperfectly, the scene of crimes, horrors, disorders, and divisions, which resulted from the reformation. However, imperfect as it is, yet is it such—so striking in every feature of deformity—that I wonder how the man who drew it, could possibly induce his reason to believe, that the principles which created it, could really be divine. Piety, I am sure, contemplating it, will reprobate its cause with indignation; and wisdom reject, as pernicious, the maxims, which are fraught with the elements of so much mischief.

“Luther,” says Hornius, “having established the right which each individual possesses of interpreting the sacred scriptures, asserted, too, that assisted by the light of heaven, he possessed also the privilege of affixing to them their true interpretation. Admitting with Luther, at least, the former of these principles, Zuinglius presents himself; but boldly declares, that not Luther, but He—and long before Luther, likewise—had found out their genuine interpretation.—Here, Carlostad comes forth, and with equal intrepidity, proclaims, that he has made a more accurate discovery of their real signification, than either of the above apostles; and instantly, in defiance of his master’s authority, breaks in pieces the images which he found in the

churches at Wittemberg, and excites great commotions in that city. Not long after this, these three leaders of the reformation commenced their dispute respecting the Holy Eucharist—a dispute, in which were often blended circumstances the most ludicrous, with acts of violence the most atrocious. The champions on each side drew after them, each an immense multitude of followers, in different kingdoms, provinces, and districts, just as the pretended evidence of the sense of the scriptures, or their pretended inspiration, actuated them;—or rather, just as their ignorance and their passions, which were under the control of the passions of their leaders, conducted them.”

“During the contestation between Luther, Zuinglius, and Carlostadius, a Silesian gentleman of the name of Schwenckfeld, discovered another interpretation of the words *this is my body*, extremely different, both from that of Luther, and from that of his two antagonists. He maintained, that the word *this* expresses not elemental, but purely spiritual bread and wine; and proceeding from error to error, contended, soon, that the letter of the scripture is useless, and that all exterior ministry in the church is superfluous.” Schwenckfeld drew after him a great multitude of partizans, whose descendants, still numerous, subsist unmolested in some of the villages of Silesia, at the present day.

“Beginning with the same maxims as the first reformers, and raising upon them the fabric of their singular institution, Stork and Munster, both of them the disciples, and the latter the great favourite of Luther, began, about the same period, to teach a variety of tenets, that were contrary to those of their master. The most prominent of these tenets were the necessity of re-baptizing all those who had been baptized in their infancy, and the establishment of a new kingdom foretold in the apocalypse, which was destined to last a thousand years and to begin from themselves. Fired with the ambition and necessity of forming and completing this new empire, they taught that it was proper, pious, and even necessary, to depose or murder all princes and magistrates, who ventured to oppose its establishment. Munster assured his followers, that God had given him, in a vision, the sword of Gideon, and even commissioned the Archangel Michael to assist him. Suffice it to say, that soon, above 100,000 deluded creatures believed and followed the impostor, upwards of 50,000 of whom perished in the field, the victims to his ambition, and the dupes of their own imbecility. The greater part of them fell, without either fighting, or attempting to run away, convinced, as Munster had promised them, either that he would stop the balls in the foldings of his robe, or catch them so, that no one should be wounded.”

“After the death of Munster, who met with the fate his crimes had merited, his sect, so far from decreasing, continued to multiply, and counted an immense herd of adherents, in every country where the seeds of the reformation had been sown. He had several successors, some of them as ambitious, and many of them as fanatic, as himself—Rotman, Knipperdoling, Matthew, John of Leyden, who from a tailor was raised to the dignity, or at least proclaimed, the *Universal Monarch of the Earth*; and who breathing nothing but inspiration, spread round him nothing but murder and devastation. Happily, however, the dreadful power which these men possessed, and the more dreadful effects which it produced, were but transient. The states in which the sect was most numerous, alarmed for their security, adopted measures to repress it; and their measures, by being rigorous, were, in general, effectual. The consequence was, as they could no longer be seditious with impunity, they gradually became moderate; and chiefly, by the influence and advice of Menno, abandoned the idea of recurring again to arms. Having, therefore, sunk to a state of indolence or inaction, and instead of contending with princes for their kingdoms, disputing with themselves about words, they soon began to fritter into distinct societies, which have very little resemblance to each other, except the identity of the general appella-

tion of Anabaptists. They are divided into Menonites, Hulterians, Gabrielists, Moravians, &c. &c. among whom there prevails a degree of confusion, equal to that which reigned at Babel. Some deny the trinity; some the distinction of persons; some maintain that all learning, particularly that of the languages, is the gift of Satan, some—So that, such is the variety and absurdity of their multiplied opinions, it is difficult to ascertain, what they consist of, in reality.”

“From the school of the Anabaptists came forth several new heresiarchs—George Delpht, who called himself the true Messiah, and who drew after him a great number of disciples, in several parts of Holland—Henry, surnamed *House of Charity*, who ranked himself above Moses and Jesus Christ—William Postel, who taught, that himself had delivered *men* from eternal death, while his wife had delivered *women*.”

“About this period, began to appear, on the theatre of the reformation, the sect of the Socinians. Their doctrines are a compound of those of Ebion, Arius, Sabellius, Photinus, Abelard, and of several other heresiarchs. With a boldness, which christianity should not tolerate, and which is dangerous to civil governments, they began to corrupt and undermine all the truths of revelation. Servetus was the first founder of the sect; Gentilis gave it some celebrity; but Lælius Socinus,

the bosom friend of Calvin, diffused it, while Faustus, the nephew of Lælius, organized it into a system."

"To the aid of impiety, there, also, in 1552, rose up the heresy of the Ubiquitarians, who maintained, along with many other errors, that the body of Jesus Christ is every where personally present, and that all the properties of the divine nature were infused into his human nature by the hypostatic union. Hence, they taught, that the body of Christ is contained in a glass of beer, in a sack of corn, in the rope with which the criminal is hanged. Their first apostle was John Westphalus, a minister of Hamburg, who was succeeded by Brentius, Wigand, Illyricus Osiander, Schmidling, and several others, the greatness of whose learning was only exceeded by the greatness of their impiety."

"During the growth and propagation of these errors, six of the principal leaders of the Ubiquitarians composed a book, which they entitled the *Concord*; and which they proposed to the general acceptance and subscription of all the protestant societies, under pain, in case of refusal, of being excluded from the communion of the Augsburg Confession. The publication of this book served only to increase the spread of confusion and disorder. It created new schisms among the gossellers, who were already divided into Lutherans, Calvin-

ists, Phillipists, Flaccans, &c. &c. some of whom received the Augsburg Confession without alteration, some only admitted it with corrections."

"In Holland, the reformation had, hardly, superseded catholicity, when its tranquillity began to be disturbed by the new and formidable society of the Arminians. These treading in the footsteps of the Socinians,---or more properly real Socinians themselves---not only entertain the most impious tenets respecting grace and predestination, they also teach, that it is wrong to worship the Holy Ghost, and that the trinity is, merely, an object of speculation, &c. Armed with these errors---strong in the host of learned men, who defended them, and still stronger in the multitudes of the unlearned, who were deluded to believe them, the Arminians not only formed a schism in the churches of the Low Countries, but they excited seditions and disturbances throughout the nation, which hardly the arm of justice, though wielding the sword of persecution, and often staining it with blood, was able to repress. However, at length, force, aided by the synod of Dort, did re-establish peace, though nothing like unanimity."

"Among the reformed churches, frequent attempts were made to bring about a reconciliation, but such was the turbulence of their respective leaders, and such their ardor for error and innovation, that every attempt proved fruitless and

abortive. Hulseman, Calovius, Botsac, Danhauwer, a crowd of other reformers, and particularly those of Wittemberg, insolently armed themselves with new violence to create divisions."

"In England, as it was in all other countries, the introduction of the reformation was the introduction of division, discord, and disorder. The passions of Henry had altered many of the ancient doctrines of the church. Edward added fresh changes to those of Henry; and Elizabeth increased the changes of Edward. However, along with all these changes, there was still permitted to subsist a multitude of popish ceremonies, and the tyrant antichristian institution of episcopacy. All these objects, but particularly the latter, were extremely obnoxious to the followers of Calvin, who, at this period, were become very numerous, and very formidable to the nation, under the name of Puritans. The contest between these and the established church forms a very striking epoch in the annals of English history.

"Nothing is so easy as for men to run into extremes. This was soon the case with the Puritans. They early began to fritter themselves into various classes of Brownists, Separatists, Semi-separatists, Robinsonians, and the numerous sects of Independents. The number of these sects exceeds forty. In short, England was infected with the venom of every species of corrupted opinion. There

was nothing sacred that was not reprobated as profane; nor hardly aught profane, that was not maintained as sacred. Even the most ignorant, and the poorest became preachers, alleging in their own defence, that the spirit breathes where it pleases;" and that truth is not confined to the schools of learning. They preached,---(the case precisely the same with the Methodists at present) and the populace was blind enough to believe them. How well,--- to use the words of the commentators of the English bible, on the 25th verse of the 10th chapter of Genesis---*how well does the name of Phaleg become our times? How well might we give this name---*(it signifies *Division*)*---to every child that comes into the world! How easy would it be to fill up our annals with this name; so deplorable are our divisions.* Never, since the creation of the world, did there exist so many monstrous opinions, as there are at present in England."

"From the body of the independents, as from the Trojan horse, there came forth upwards of forty different sects. Some of them rejected the scriptures; some taught, that there was no longer any church of God whatever, on earth,---these were called *Waiters* :---some maintained, that there was indeed a church, but that it was hidden, and these were called *Seekers*. The opinions of some of these sectarists are too horrible to be related. For my own part, I think, as those do, who say,

that England is the great nurse of errors, and the great theatre where there exists the most dreadful licentiousness of believing, writing, teaching whatever passion or folly is pleased to dictate. The history of the heresies and schisms of other nations presents nothing to be compared to the scenes of error which it exhibits."

"At periods, also, still more recent than those, to which I have alluded, Great Britain continued to hold out to the rest of Europe, the same, or nearly the same, scenes of extravagance and impiety with the above. You might often find in one family, as many religions, as there were individuals who composed it. The pretext and apology for all this, were liberty of conscience, and the privilege of general toleration. In reality, nothing is more flattering to self-love and vanity, than to judge for one's self, to assume the Ephod, and to be the arbiter of our own belief."---HORNIIUS.

Such is the description which a learned and zealous protestant presents of the errors and confusion, which resulted from the reformation; and such the concluding reflections which he makes upon the principle from which the errors and confusion grew. From his description, it is evident, that when once reason is emancipated from the influences of authority, or has rejected the divinity of the catholic church, not only are unity and order unattainable, it is evident, that every species of

error, and every form of disorder are the obvious and never-failing consequences. For my own part, after calculating the nature of religion—the sublimity of its doctrines, and the severity of its maxims—after calculating the weakness of the human mind, and the force of passion, self-love, and the imagination—after calculating these, with all the difference of character, which the difference of capacity, inclination, habit, and education must create—and hearing it admitted, that every individual is, by the supposed light and suggestions of his own reason, allowed to judge of the doctrines of revelation, and by his judgment, regulate his faith—not only do all the absurdities which Hornius has enumerated, appear to me natural and consistent, they appear to me, *with such principles*, although absurd, reasonable; although impious, harmless; and although numerous, few. For, where each individual is permitted to judge for himself—and *each cannot judge right*—where can be the crime of error? Or, in like manner, where each one is permitted to judge for himself—and *each one cannot judge alike*,—where can be the cause of wonder, that the forms of error should be innumerable? And yet it is true, that by the principles of protestantism, not only each individual is permitted, but to be consistent, even obliged to be the judge and arbiter of his own belief. “*Judge for your-*

selves," says Luther, "*that is the sole rule of truth, and the sole rule of gospel liberty.*"*

What a prolific source of errors and impieties is here laid open to the human mind; and how easy it is, by it, to account for all the heresies and abuses, disorders and horrors of the reformation! Surely;—and the idea occurs to my reason with insuperable force—surely if truth be *divine* and *one*, and if the profession of truth,—as it is—be essential to salvation, then should the path which conducts to it be more secure, and the means of attaining it more

*I quote Luther, as the highest authority which the protestant ought to revere, he being, as Dr. Rennel observes, after a multitude of other protestants, "*the chosen instrument of God commissioned to instruct mankind.*" But, the above rule is, by no means, peculiar to that great apostle, it is equally the rule of every sect of the reformation; and although there was a period, when some of our establishment had the inconsistency to contest it, "*it has ceased,*" as Belsham remarks, "*ever since the Bangorian controversy, to be called in question.*" "*It is even,*" he adds, "*admitted in its full extent, with an explicit avowal of, and approbation of all its consequences.*" As an instance of the explicitness of this avowal, just take the words of Dr. Watson, in one of his charges. "When we take, says this great man, an enlarged view of the nature of man, and of the different situations, in which, not only different nations, but different individuals in the same nation, are placed, with respect to religious attainments, we must feel the necessity of vindicating to every individual of the human race, *the absolute right of worshipping God IN HIS OWN WAY.*"

easy! I cannot help imagining, that the reformation gives too much liberty to its disciples, were its disciples even all wise, learned, and virtuous. But, to give an uncontrollable liberty *to all*; and permit,---yea, command *all* to employ that liberty in the investigation of truth, and the selection of their faith, this to me appears worse than nonsense. It would, I think, be just equally wise to command the ignorant and unexperienced landsman, without sail or rudder, without helm or compass, to sail amid storms and darkness, to the pole—just equally wise to bid the populace be always sober, and yet open pipes of wine, or oceans of liquor to their intemperance.

Since the period when Hornius drew up his genealogy of the errors of the reformation, it is well known how much the frightful generation has been increased. Error, since that epoch, has been daily begetting error, and fancy and fanaticism producing folly and superstition. Each parent sect has, with prolific fecundity, generated an offspring too numerous, in some instances, for industry to enumerate—an offspring, soon, like its parent, producing another offspring, countless perhaps as that of its parent. In reality, each sect almost has proved an hundred headed monster,—or as Hornius says of the Independents, each sect, like the Grecian horse in Troy, has teemed out a host of men, who disfiguring the beauty, mutilating the integri-

ty, and corrupting the sanctity of religion, have seduced the credulity of the ignorant; and by a thousand different paths, conducted them to the abysses of perdition. It is not my intention,—although the circumstance is well deserving the attention of curiosity,—to trace this monstrous genealogy. It demands resources, which I have not; and patience, also, of which I am equally destitute, as I am of resources. Walton, in the preface, I believe, to his Polyglot, tells us, that even “in this country, the abyss of hell seemed to have been let open, and to have darkened with its smoke the light of heaven. All protestants, says he, are become doctors and divinely learned; and, as once in Greece Aristarchus could hardly find seven wise men, so among us, there are hardly seven fools. The veriest idiot preaches the word of God; and our cities, villages, camps, houses, nay our very churches and pulpits are filled with these, who lead the poor deluded people after them to the pit of hell.” It is evident, that where “*all are wise, and all preachers,*” the spawn of sects and sectarists must be innumerable.

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On the variations in the protestant creeds.

“What beings, says the reformer Dudith, in his letter to Beza, what beings are we protestants, wandering to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, sometimes to this side, sometimes to that! You may perhaps guess what we believe to-day; but you will never be able to ascertain what we shall profess to-morrow. In what point of religion do the churches agree among themselves, which have rejected the authority of the see of Rome? Examine them from first to last, you will scarce find any one tenet affirmed or believed by one sect, which is not immediately condemned by another.”

But, in order to form a tolerable accurate idea of the numberless variations, which nearly each creed of the reformation underwent, I refer the reader to Bossuet's History of the Protestant variations. There he may trace, very distinctly, the truth of Bishop Dudith's inculcation—opinions veering, like the winds, and belief unsettled as the waves. “He will find religion, in this country,” Sir Richard Baker observes, “come to a strange pass, because always in passing, and having no consistency, so that, in reality,” he adds, “the

fable of Proteus is no longer a fable, if the religion of England be its moral."

But why look for unity and order, where individuals have all an equal share of liberty,—where each has the right to judge and decide, and none the power to control his decision? Admit only a similar system of civil liberty into politics, how soon would society exhibit a scene of anarchy and discord? But, the case is, the protestant governments understand much better the nature of civil liberty; and regulate much more wisely its influences, than their churches conceive the principles, and direct the bearings of their religious liberty.

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The reformed churches have all departed from their original constitutions.

Mosheim, whose partiality to protestantism is only surpassed by his prejudices against popery, very honestly, in spite of both, admits the licentiousness, and acknowledges the variations which have taken place in all the different codes of faith of the reformed churches.

"In Germany," he says, "at present, the Lutherans take the most unbounded liberty of dissent-

ing from their symbolical books, which, formerly, were considered by them as an almost infallible rule of belief and practice.”—CENT. 17.

“Towards the end of the 17th century, they (the Lutherans) adopted the leading maxims of the Arminians, that Christians are accountable to God alone for their religious sentiments; whence the most unbridled licentiousness originated, which holds nothing sacred.”—CENT. 17.

“In the reformed church of France, its doctors have departed, in several points, from their common rule of faith.”—CENT. 17.

“The city of Geneva has not only put on sentiments of esteem for the Arminians, but is become almost so far Arminian, as to deserve a place among the churches of that communion.”—CENT. 17.

But, speaking of reformed churches in general, he says:—

“Though there be, every where, certain books, creeds, and confessions, by which the wisdom and vigilance of ancient times have thought proper to perpetuate the truths of religion, and to preserve them from the contagion of heresy, yet in most places, no person is obliged to adhere to the doctrines they contain. . . . Hence, in our times, this great and extensive community comprehends in its bosom Arminians, Calvinists, Supralapsarians, Sublapsarians, and Universalists.”—CENT. 18.

Why does he not say, at once, that the members of these establishments are, nearly all, free-thinkers, verifying the prophecy of d'Alembert---though, indeed, it did not require a very prophetic spirit to foresee it---"*that every protestant church would, ere long, become Socinian?*" In this country, the case is the same as in those which Mosheim mentions. "The articles of our established church," Mason Good remarks, "are differently interpreted by many, even of the Right Reverend Bench itself, from what they were formerly; and it seems doubtful," he adds, "whether their basis be chiefly Arminian or Calvinistic." Mason Good, although he says the truth, says little; for in regard of the 39 articles, I do not think there are a dozen members of the establishment, who have the weakness to believe them. I think, that if in general interrogated respecting their belief of them---*and they would honestly answer the interrogation*---or if reproached for having subscribed them without believing them---*and they would meekly bear the reproach*---they would return the same answer, and make the same apology, which one of the reviewers informs us a gentleman of Cambridge made lately, on the occasion of such interrogation and such reproach; "*Why,*" said the learned and honest clergyman, "*no one believes them; and therefore, by subscribing them, I deceive*

nobody; the subscription is a mere matter of form and ceremony."

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On the inconsistency of the protestant sects condemning each other for heresy.

However improper be the motive, or inconsistent the principle, upon which the reformers insult the papist and condemn popery, yet it is easy to account, from various causes, for such intemperance. The mere circumstance of our professing the truth accounts for it sufficiently; "for truth is always odious to error." But, it is not so easy to account by any principles, and least of all, by the principles of protestantism, for the great severity with which the protestant sects have mutually and repeatedly treated each other—censuring, excommunicating, and condemning each other, as schismatics, heretics, &c. &c. Doubtless, if men have all an equal right to judge, then have all an equal right to believe their judgments true—if Dr. Watson's rule be correct, that protestantism consists in believing and teaching what each one pleases—"et sentire quæ velit et quæ sentiat loqui"—then is it a violation of protestant principle to condemn or censure any one for his belief, be the nature of

his belief what it may. By this rule there is, evidently, no such thing as heresy. Or, if there be the only heresy, by it, would be the condemnation of any individual for believing what he pleases—for what other violation can such a rule admit?

Therefore do I smile, when I hear the protestant of our establishment, or the Lutheran, call the Calvinist or the Anabaptist heretics. For why, while even each private individual is permitted to believe whatever he may please—why was not Calvin as much as Cranmer, and Muncer as much as Luther, allowed the same privilege;—or why not, equally with them, if they could do it, allowed to erect distinct establishments? Should any be so unwise, as to contend that Calvin, or Muncer, or any other reformer, are heretics, because they dissented, or dissent from the established religion of a country, then must they own, that all the first reformers—the apostles of protestantism—were heretics and rebels; because they all dissented from the religion of the established church. But, the case is obvious; certainly, Calvin was allowed what Cranmer was; and Muncer the same as Luther; and therefore, if the former were not heretics for believing and teaching what they pleased, so neither were the latter. Yes; and it is the same thing, precisely, with the respective followers of these men. The Calvinist is no more a heretic than the Anglican; nor the Anabaptist than the

Lutheran. Each individual, in each sect, possess the same right to judge, as the apostle who formed his sect. Every protestant is equal---and

Among equals lies no last appeal.

By these principles, which admit no other tribunal in faith, but private judgment, it is plain, that it is grossly inconsistent in one class of protestants to condemn, as heretics, the members of any other, be what may the tenets which they profess.

Yes; and I smile too, when even I hear the protestants---as they all do---condemn the ancient innovators as heretics---the Arians, Nectorians, Pelagians, &c. For there is no maxim in the code of protestantism, by which either they should consider, or reprobate them as such. *They judged and believed as they pleased*; and this by the rule of protestantism, they were bound to do. They had the same attestations, and the same sanctions for their belief, with the wisest protestant. Or, if the protestant should say, that by reading the scriptures more accurately than the Arians, the Nestorians, and Pelagians (and, indeed, this is what alone he should say) he, there, discovers that these men were heretics—I answer, that such mode of reasoning is absurd, or, at best, a mere presumption of the point in question. The Arian, the Nestorian, and Pelagian reply, that themselves read the sacred scriptures, more accurately than the

protestant; and *there* discovered, they add, that their's, not the tenets of the protestant, are divine: and, of course, that not they, but the protestants, are the heretics.—Who are right, who wrong?—Why, it is plain, that since all have the same liberty to judge, and the same motives and evidences to believe that their judgments are correct,—there is no more reason why the protestant should condemn the ancient innovators of heresy, than why the ancient innovators—were the circumstance possible—should condemn the protestant. For my own part, I cannot conceive how, by the maxims of protestantism, any one can possibly be a heretic:—or, if by these maxims, the thing be possible, I do not conceive how it can be proved, that Arius, or Nestorius, or Pelagius were heretics, if Luther, or Calvin, or Cranmer were not.

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Authority in religion.——Rousseau's reflections on the reformation.

“Prove to me,” says Rosseau, “that I am bound to obey authority in religion, and to-morrow I become a catholic.” The reason is, that as catholicity reposes upon the basis of authority—as infi-

delity and protestantism, both in principle and in reality, are founded upon the ruins of authority:—whoever proves the necessity of authority, proves consequently the necessity of admitting catholicity; and, of course, the progressive necessity, in order to be consistent, of re-entering the pale of the parent church.

As I have quoted Rosseau, I will not close the volume without transcribing from it the following striking passages. They may not be quite analogous to the subject of the above paragraph; but they are so forcible, so eloquent, and conclusive against the protestant, on the subject of the reformation in general, that I shall gratify the admirers of good reasoning and elegance, by their insertion. Amid the falsehoods and impieties of Rosseau, there are, sometimes, interspersed truths, which are set off with a stile, and enforced with a degree of wisdom, that would have done honour to the talents and piety of an Austin, a Bossuet, or a Fenelon. “Let us re-ascend,” he says, “to the origin of the protestant religion. When the reformers began to publish their new doctrines, the whole church enjoyed a perfect peace: opinion was unanimous: there was not one essential dogma contested in the christian body. In this state of tranquility, behold, two or three men raise their voices, and cry out to all Europe: Christians, beware, you are deceived, led astray, and conducted

blindfold in the road to hell. The pope is Antichrist, and the agent of the devil; and his church, the school of falsehood. You are damned, if you refuse to listen to us.

“At these first vociferations, Europe in astonishment, paused for some moments in silence, awaiting the result. At length, the clergy recovering from their first surprise, and observing, that the new comers attracted followers, thought it necessary to come to an explanation with them. They began by asking them what was the object and the end of the tumult which they had excited? We are, they fiercely answered, the apostles of truth, called to reform the church, and to re-conduct the faithful from the paths of perdition, in which the priests are leading them.”

“But,” answered the clergy, “who gave you this fine commission, to come and disturb the peace of the church, and to destroy the public tranquility?” . . . “Our consciences,” they said, “our reason, our interior light, the voice of God, which we cannot resist, without a crime. It is God who called us to this holy ministry, and we follow our vocation.”

“You are then,” replied the catholics, “the envoys of God? In that case, we allow it is your duty to preach, to reform, and instruct; and it is our duty to listen to you. However, in order to obtain this right, begin first, if you please, to shew

us your credentials:—prophecy—enlighten—perform miracles—display the proofs of your mission.” “We are the envoys of God,” answered the reformers; “but our mission is an extraordinary one. We bring no new revelation: we confine ourselves to that which has been given to you, but which you now misunderstand. We come forward not with prodigies, which might deceive you, and with which so many false doctrines are recommended; but with the signs of truth and reason, which cannot deceive you—with this sacred volume, which you disfigure, and which we explain. Our miracles are invincible arguments; and our prophecies are demonstrations. We foretell you, that if you refuse to listen to the voice of Christ, which speaks to you by our mouths, you shall be punished like faithless servants, who knowing the will of their master, refuse to do it.”

“It was not natural, that the catholic should admit the evidence of this new doctrine; and it was generally rejected. The dispute, therefore, being reduced to this point, it was in vain to expect its termination. Each party triumphed in its own cause,—the protestants still maintaining, that their interpretation and their proofs were so clear and manifest, that only insincerity could reject them—the catholics, on their side, convinced that the trifling arguments of a few individuals—arguments too, which it was easy to answer—ought,

not to prevail over the authority of the whole church, which in every age, had decided differently from the reformers upon the points in question."

"Such was the state in which the quarrel rested. They ceased not disputing respecting the authority of the proofs—a dispute, which can never end, till men have all the same head.

"But, here, the catholics acted unwisely. Had they instead of contesting the doctrines of their adversaries, called only in question their right of preaching and instructing, they would have confounded and perplexed them. In the first place, they should have said to them, 'your mode of reasoning is a mere *petitio principii*—begging the question. For, if the strength of your arguments be the proof of your mission, it follows, that where they do not convince, your mission is false; and, consequently, that it is lawful to punish you as heretics and false apostles,—as the disturbers of the church and of society. You assert, that you are the envoys of heaven; and you oblige us to believe you, on your word alone; for you give no other sign of your divine commission, but new interpretations of the scriptures, which have always been understood in a different sense from yours. You preach, you tell us, no new doctrines; but what then are your new interpretations, if they are not new doctrines? Surely, to give a new sense to the words

of the scripture, is not this establishing a new doctrine? Is it not making God speak otherwise than he had spoken before? It is not the sound, but the sense of the words that God revealed; and therefore, changing the sense, which has been always admitted and determined in the church,—that is changing revelation.”

“Moreover, behold how unjust you are; you allow that miracles are essential, in order to authorize a divine mission---and yet, you mere individuals, you grant it, you come without miracles; and speak to us, imperiously, as the envoys of the Almighty. You claim the authority of interpreting the scriptures by the dictates of your own caprice; and yet you take from us the liberty to do the like. You arrogate to yourselves alone a right which you refuse to each of us; and which you even refuse to *all us*, who compose the great body of the church. Pray, on what title do you thus subject our judgments to your private interpretation? . . . What unpardonable self-sufficiency, to pretend to be always in the right—to pretend to be *alone* in the right, notwithstanding the reclamation of the whole christian universe against you,—and to be unwilling to let any differ from you, who have as much reason to believe themselves in the right as you have. The distinctions which you claim, could at best be sufferable, did you plainly give us your advice and nothing more. But, no,

you attack us with open war; blow up, everywhere, the flames of discord; and then tell us, forsooth, that the resistance to your doctrines is rebellion, idolatry, and a crime deserving hell! You will, absolutely, convert, convince, and compel us. You dogmatize, preach, censure, anathematize, excommunicate, punish, and put to death. You exercise the authority of prophets; and yet give yourselves out as mere private individuals. What, *you* innovators and intruders! upon your word alone, and supported only by a few hundred individuals, *you* burn your adversaries—while *we*, supported by the antiquity of fifteen centuries, and the voice of a hundred million adherents, *we* do wrong in restraining you! Either then, cease to speak and act like apostles, or show us your commissions; or else, as we are stronger, you ought, in justice, to be treated as impostors.' . . . What solid answer could the reformers have made to this expostulation? For my own part, I cannot see it. I think, that either they would have been reduced to silence, or compelled to work miracles."

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Protestantism the source of incredulity.

It is not under the influence of prejudice, nor at the suggestion of illiberality to the protestant—it is not even to retort back an odious charge, which the enemies of catholicity have, recently, with malevolous industry, cast upon it—that, either in my discourse, or in the series of these illustrations, I have attributed to protestantism the generation and propagation of incredulity. Against *the protestant*, if I know myself, I have no prejudice whatever; nor are the imputations which I bring forward meant to apply *to the protestant in general*. The protestant in general, entertains as much abhorrence of impiety, as the catholic.—It is *upon protestant principles* that I propose chiefly to reflect, which, from a fortunate ignorance, or equally fortunate indolence, protestants in general do not know; or, at least, by a happy inconsistency, do not follow. Born protestants, and trained to believe what the nurse and the parson taught them, they, without further inquiry, live protestants, and honestly reprobate impiety—just, as under the same pious tutelage, they without knowing the cause, cordially reprobate popery and the papist. Be it then understood, that although, indeed, I

do censure a multitude of protestants for aiding the growth of impiety; yet, it is not upon *the protestant in general*, but upon protestant principles, that I fix the chief odium of having given birth, and strength, and maturity to that dreadful evil.

I said, *the chief* odium; for neither do I mean to attach the whole mischief of impiety either to those protestants who first introduced the principles of impiety, nor to the influence of the principles themselves. In the walks of life, there are men who are impious, or unbelievers, from a variety of principles---from passion, licentiousness, vanity---many who are impious, from no principle whatever, sophistical buffoons, who laugh at whatever is not mean as their own ignorance, or depraved as their own hearts. There are various principles of impiety; and therefore, I by no means intend to assert, that the principles of protestantism are its *only* source.

However, this I assert, and I think the circumstance evident---that the principles of protestantism, that is, the liberty of private judgment, and the consequent liberty of believing only what private judgment dictates, are the natural source of impiety--- have eventually proved the source of impiety, and have been acknowledged such by the school of impiety itself. I will endeavour to prove these three positions in the series of this illustration,

I say then, in the first place, that the principles of protestantism, that is, the liberty of private judgment, and the belief reposing upon the dictate of private judgment, are the *natural sources* of impiety.

It will not be denied, by whoever has but superficially studied the nature of the human character—the various forms of its capacity, and the still more various forms of its dispositions,—were even the former far more enlarged, and the latter far less corrupted, than they are—it will not be denied, that it is impossible for all to see truth in the same point of view, or to agree exactly in the same notion of its certainty, its expediency, and its wisdom. For all to see truth in the same point of view, and agree exactly in their notions of its properties, it would be necessary, that all should have the same talents to discern it, and the same inclinations and candor to admit it. And, since this is not the case, it obviously follows, that if, indeed, men will view truths and judge of them as they please, of course they will see them differently, and disagree about their import; and again, of course,—as all disagreement implies error *somewhere*—multitudes will err.

Error, therefore, results from the mere liberty of judgment, reposing upon the mere varieties of the human capacity and human disposition—supposing, too, that these be neither corrupted nor

depraved.—But, suppose now, that all these varieties of capacity and disposition are corrupted and depraved—suppose the capacity weakened by the passions and prejudices of society; and the disposition vitiated by its excesses, what errors—if they produce errors when uncorrupted—ought they not to generate under so impure a fermentation? Let the eye only cast a glance along the paths and avenues of life, how small,—how extremely small a number does it discern, that are virtuous and wise! It discovers, and reads distinctly, that the great herd of mankind consists of men who are the dupes of dissipation, vice, ignorance, pride, self-love, interest, &c. Well; and give to all these the equal liberty to judge, and decide for themselves—and to judge too, and decide for themselves upon truths, which are transcendentally superior to the reach of their abilities, unpleasing to their passions, and painful to their self-love—good sense, I ask thee, what should naturally be the consequence of such liberty? Why, doubtlessly, that they would judge wrong—doubtlessly, that seeing objects through false mediums—through the mediums of passion, and ignorance, and prejudice, and pride, and interest, they would see them in the colours of these vices, and give them the interpretation which is most natural to these vices. Thus,—for the case is quite correlative—give men the liberty to act as they please, what would be

the consequence? Certainly; that they would act ill, and convert their liberty into a source of anarchy. The case, I have said, is quite correlative; for, it is just as natural to think ill, as it is to act ill—just as natural to believe profanely, as to act profanely. And hence, nothing is more manifest, than that if you allow all, indiscriminately, to judge for themselves, and to judge for themselves, too, upon truths the most sublime; and obligations, which are painful to their inclinations, they will, multitudes of them, at least—some misconceive, some misinterpret, and some misbelieve them—they will, some of them, deride and condemn them. Unfortunately, incredulity is congenial to vice and corruption. It is their unhappy interest to be incredulous; because it is their unhappy interest—if they will pursue the career of pleasure—to remove all those circumstances which cast a gloom upon their enjoyments.—*And yet, need I repeat it—it is true, that protestantism allows and sanctions to every individual the most boundless liberty of judgment and belief?* It is the *Magna Charta*, the Bill of Rights, of the Reformation.

Yes; and were vice and corruption far less general, and less licentious than they are, yet would curiosity alone, and the fondness of novelty, where they are permitted to believe what they please, produce countless forms of error and systems of impiety. There is not, perhaps, any principle in

the human mind, even in the mind of the wise and moral, which it is more pleasing to exert, than the freedom of speculation. It gratifies the pride of reason, and flatters the partialities of self-love; it amuses and animates the boldness of liberty, and gives fresh energy to the wings of the imagination. It is, accordingly, to curiosity, or to this fondness for speculation, that the writers of the Great French Encyclopedia—the D'Alemberts and Diderots, attribute much of the growth and diffusion of impiety. "The first step," say these men, "which the curious and indocile catholic takes, when he begins to be dissatisfied with his religion, is to adopt the protestant rule of investigation—to constitute himself the judge of the doctrines of religion, and to become a protestant. Led on by this rule, in the ardour of investigation, he soon begins to discover, that the principles of protestantism, too, are incoherent, and its doctrines unintelligible. Still, therefore, conducted by the same rule, he goes forward, and becomes a Socinian. Socinianism, he finds out, has all the perplexities and inconsistencies of protestantism; and he, therefore, declares himself a deist. Well; still discontented, because still pursued with difficulties, he insensibly becomes a Pyrrhonist. Pyrrhonism is a state too painful for self-love to endure, and he concludes the series of his errors by sinking into the dreadful abyss of atheism." Thus do men,

who had studied well the nature of the human mind; who had often traced effects to their causes with great acuteness, and who had pursued the principle of free investigation through all its bearings—attribute the growth of every form of incredulity to the adoption and application of the rule of protestantism—although it be adopted and applied from the mere principle of curiosity, acting under the influence of the supposed desire and search of rational evidence.

In reality, all this appears but natural to whoever has wisely reflected on the nature of the human mind, which is extremely weak, and the easy dupe of the disorders of the imagination—on the nature of truth, which is often a labyrinth intersected with countless mazes—on the nature of religion, whose dogmas are too sublime for reason to comprehend. Not only is error the natural appendage of curiosity; but considering how men conduct their curiosity, and to what objects they direct it, it appears to me, that almost every form of error—from harmless nonsense, down to the most profane impiety—is, almost, equally natural. I have just quoted the sentiments of the Encyclopedists upon the effects which the unrestricted liberty of investigation is wont to generate. To their testimony I will add another, which like theirs, upon this subject, is unexceptionable and philosophic—the testimony of the celebrated, but

impious Bayle. "Reasoning," says this unhappily great writer, "if not wisely regulated and restrained, instead of proving truth, combats it. When allowed to follow the dictates of the imagination, it neither knows where it is, nor where it ought to stop. It is a corrosive powder, which after having eaten the corrupted parts of the wound, eats next the sound; attacks and consumes the bone, and, at last, penetrates to the very marrow."

The fact is—and Bayle alludes to it in his reflections upon the causes of error—few men reason wisely, that is, upon clear data and correct maxims—few place the objects which they affect to study, in the attitude in which alone they ought to be contemplated; or if they do, they place themselves probably in the wrong situation to catch their various bearings and relations—few have the wisdom to know how to combine, or the industry to labour to combine, the detached and scattered parts of the systems, which either they, perhaps, blindly follow, or with equal blindness, perhaps, reject—few have the good sense to pursue, correctly, the long chain of an analysis through all its links of dependents, subordinates, &c. which mutually, like the parts of a problem in mathematics, hang by each other, supporting each other, giving consistency to each other, and conducting, at length, to that point, where reason reposes under the beam

of evidence—few, in short, reason correctly, and of course, few draw correct conclusions,—few reason upon true principles, and therefore, few draw true conclusions. Where a man reasons only upon a false principle, if he have the unhappy consistency to follow it up through its results, he must essentially become the dupe of error; and, if he apply it to important subjects, he must essentially become the dupe of important errors. One false principle in reasoning, like one error in calculation, must produce a false result. In a sum, where one part is incorrect, the whole product is incorrect; or else, as Lucretius says,

In fabricâ, si falsa est regula prima,
Omnia mendose fieri atque obstipa necessum est,
Prava, cubantia, prona, supina.

“I could believe,” says Bayle, “if I were permitted to believe from the combinations of reasoning deduced from one false principle, that men and Gods are the produce of fermentation.” Yes, and suppose too—which frequently is the case—that the men who adopt and pursue false principles, or if you please, who adopt a wrong method of applying true principles—suppose them to be the vain, the ignorant, the prejudiced, and the partial—it is evident, that the consequences which they will deduce, will be not only false, but false almost

in every degree of error, which the fancy can suggest. Or suppose—which is likewise more frequently still the case—that the vicious, the libertine, and the profligate, armed with false principles, and with the liberty of applying them as they please, do apply them in reality; and suppose that they apply them in balancing the evidences of religion against the evidences of philosophy, under the direction of the protestant maxim, that nothing is to be believed, but what their senses penetrate, or their reason comprehends—why, as it is evident, in the first instance, that they would penetrate, and comprehend *little*, so it is also evident, that they would believe *little*; but, as too, it is their interest to believe *nothing*, so it is also plain, that with such principles, acting under the influence of such passions, they would, many of them, believe *nothing*. When men of this description pretend to weigh the awful subject of religion, truth is a mere atom in the balance. Bolder than Brennus, they not only direct the beam, but they cast the whole ponderous mass of their passions, and interests, and prejudices, into the scale against it. Atheism, and a total emancipation from all the restraints of religion, are the natural results of unrestrained investigation.

I said, in the second place,—and this will be an elucidation of the preceding paragraphs—that the principles of protestantism have *eventually* proved

the source of much impiety. Whoever will give himself the trouble to consult the history of the introduction and growth of incredulity, will discover, even upon the testimony of many protestant historians, from the coincidence of dates, and the authority of facts, that its introduction was precisely coeval with the introduction of the reformation; that its growth grew with the growth of the reformation; and that its opinions are merely the application and consequences of the leading maxim of the reformation. I shall give the proofs of these, perhaps, apparently harsh assertions. Previous to the epoch of the reformation, curiosity, it is certain, seeks in vain, I do not say for a society, or sect of *incredulous*—it seeks, almost in vain, through the lapse of ages, and the extent of kingdoms, for the solitary individual, who had the bold impiety to call in question the divinity of revelation; and when it finds such, it finds that he seems only to have appeared to excite the astonishment, and awaken the horror of the public. Although, as I have observed there existed, at every period, many of the materials—vice, passion, interest, and pride—which enter into the composition of incredulity, yet was there then no torch to set them in a blaze; or at least, no hand sufficiently daring to present the torch to the combustible materials. The christian universe, till the reformation, consisted of believers in revelation.

Luther begins the bold career of innovation. He lays it down as the first maxim of his pretended reform,—a maxim, which Roscoe calls “*his unperishable honor and merit*,” that the reason of each individual is the sole guide and arbiter of his belief. I have already made some philosophic observations on the nature and tendency of this maxim; and whoever, bearing these in his recollection, will reflect also, upon the features of the times, when Luther introduced it, and the tempers of the men, whom he induced to adopt it, will, without the aid of much sagacity, conceive what were the effects which it produced. Strait did error, in every varied shape of deformity, pervade all the paths of society, where it grew, establishing its dominion upon the ruins of virtue, piety and wisdom. Within the interval of very few years, the protestant historians themselves inform us, there were formed and organized above two hundred codes of religious faith! It was probably the impious confusion, originating in the leading principle of the reformation, that the acute mind of Melancthon foresaw, and contemplated, when he so emphatically exclaimed, *Great God! what mischiefs are we reformers preparing for the universe!**

* It is the opinion of Lord Bacon, and indeed of many others, that the mere circumstance of divisions in faith, are the causes of atheism. “*The causes of atheism*,” says Bacon, “*are divisions in religion, if they be many.*” The reason is

Not that I consider two hundred systems of belief as numerous, when I consider, at the same time, the principle upon which they were hinged, and the impulse which was given to the public mind to make the application of that principle. On the contrary, calculating for the operation of these circumstances, I conceive them few—I conceive, that the application of the principle was made, at first, with a certain mixture of timidity. Withheld by the influences of their early education, a multitude of the first heresiarchs, still retained in their tenets and practices many of the great mysteries, and pious observances of the parent church. They had not—so little even were their passions prepared for all the mischiefs of infidelity—they had not the dreadful intrepidity to apply their own maxims with consistency. The first errors of the reformation, although marked with great profaneness, were still rather the effects of anarchy,—such as distinguish the openings of all revolutions, than plain; even abstracting from the workings of vice, which, also, are always forcible on these occasions:—divisions create doubt and perplexity in the minds of some, and contempt in the minds of others. In either case, incredulity is a natural consequence; and Kett acknowledges that such, indeed, was the case among the sects of the reformation. “*The dissensions,*” he says, “*which prevailed among the numerous sects, which sprang from the doctrines of Luther and Calvin, unhappily assisted in the introduction of infidelity.*”—View of the prophecies.

the regular combinations, and systematic effects, which the principles of protestantism were calculated to produce.

Such, however, is the nature of these principles, and so obvious the consequences which they contain—so congenial, at the same time, to the pride and self-love of human reason, it is to deduce these consequences, that it cannot be supposed that any considerable length of interval would elapse, before their admirers would have the unhappy courage to attempt their application, and the philosophy to pursue them through some of their various bearings. Indeed, among the great host of their admirers, there were a multitude of men, who to great courage and a warm zeal for liberty, united also much philosophy, and very extensive erudition. Protestantism, at the period to which I am alluding, did certainly comprise within its pale, a class of men, whose abilities and learning would have done credit to the brightest æras of literature. Accordingly—it was about twenty years after the introduction of the reformation—we find a portion of these men come forward; form themselves into a separate sect, and attract an immense body of followers and disciples into their society, consisting, like its leaders, of the most learned and distinguished members of the protestant communion.

It will not surely be denied, that the Socinians ---for this is the society to which I have allud-

ed—were members of the protestant communion; neither will it, I think, be asserted, that the Socinians ceased to be protestants, by becoming Socinians. As for the circumstance of the first Socinians having been members of the protestant church, this, Mosheim, and with him, the protestant historians who have written upon the subject of Socinianism, admit. The writings, indeed, of the first Socinians render it incontestible. And, as for the other circumstance—of their having ceased to be protestants by becoming Socinians—this, like the preceding, only ignorance and prejudice could maintain. The truth is, that the Socinians, so far from ceasing to be protestants, by becoming Socinians, on the contrary, become, by that very action, rational and consistent protestants. They but regulate their tenets according to the real tendency of protestant principles; and their faith, they build upon protestant maxims. They, too, very properly consider and call themselves protestants: only they consider and call themselves consistent protestants; philosophically, logically, and honestly deducing the consequences, which their acknowledged principles, too evidently, contain. Certainly, the Socinians are protestants, and if consistency signify the correspondence of tenets with the dictates of principles, they are, it is true, the only consistent class of protestants. As for the numbers of the Socinians, Mosheim remarks, they

have always since the introduction of their heresy, been very considerable, in every place almost where protestantism subsists. At the present period, they form, in point of talents and erudition, the most respectable portion of that community.

It is, in general, peculiarly wrong to make that a compliment, which may perhaps, be construed into an insult; and, therefore, having praised the consistency and learning of the Socinians, it may appear singular, that I should accuse them of impiety. And yet is such the case. Although I do, certainly, consider the Socinians as the most consistent sect of the great protestant community; yet do I also consider them the most irreligious, and the most profane.—The principles of Socinianism are the two leading principles of protestantism, *that the scriptures are the sole rule of faith, and that reason is their sole interpreter*. Guided by these, they reason in regard of the various tenets of revelation, precisely as the other sects of protestantism reason in regard of some of the doctrines of popery—which, it is well known, these reject because to their reason and comprehensions, they appear absurd. The principle they say—and they say it philosophically—*that reason is the sole guide of faith*—implies the necessity of believing only what reason understands; and of course, of rejecting whatever appears repugnant to its apprehensions. The principle excludes the belief of mystery; and the

consequence is, the Socinians profess the disbelief of mystery---at least, they profess the disbelief of the great prominent mysteries of christianity. They reject the Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, the divinity of Jesus Christ, original sin, the effects of the sacraments, the operations of divine grace, &c. &c. The profaneness of Socinianism, to the pious believer in revelation, appears---and certainly is---extreme. In order to justify it, or reconcile it to the nicer delicacy of their protestant brethren, the Socinians shew them that they but reason as the maxims of protestantism direct; and that if, indeed, there be any thing impious in their tenets, the impiety is not in their reasonings, but in the maxims which contain them: they shew them, too, that in respect either of the above mysteries, or of any other mysteries of revelation, which they disbelieve, they but disbelieve them on the same principles, and prove them errors by the same process of argumentation, by which themselves reject and refute the doctrines of catholicity.--I am not the advocate of the Socinians--I reprobate their principles, and abhor their tenets---and yet, I do contend, that if, indeed, the former were true,---and they are what every protestant admits---the latter would, in general, be correct. The case is, the impiety of the Socinian tenets is contained in the principle, that reason is the arbiter of faith. If men have the misfortune to admit that principle,

and the consistency to pursue it, of course, since reason understands no mystery, it admits no mystery: and thus every protestant, did he follow up his own principles, would be reduced, in order to be consequent, to the necessity of becoming a Socinian.

I had advanced to this part of my illustration, when accident threw into my hands a recent publication from the pen of the Bishop of Durham. Its general tenor has no analogy to my present subject; but it contains two notes, which are immediately connected with it; and upon which I shall, therefore, make a few desultory observations.

At the bottom of the twentieth page of the work, his lordship informs the reader, that there exists a "*remarkable parallel between popery and Socinianism*;" and by way of proof, that there does really exist such "*remarkable parallel*," he refers the reader to a learned Latin note, in the pages 45 and 46, where he finds no kind of parallel whatever! but a mere assertion, like his lordship's, that such a parallel exists. If the parallel consists only in the compliments which the papist is supposed, or does occasionally, pay the Socinian, or which the Socinian, in like manner, sometimes pays to the papist, doubtless, there is great reason to admire the acuteness of the discernment, which in so trifling a circumstance, can trace "*a remarkable parallel*." If it consist in aught beside, it is pity, that while his

lordship gives us so much room to admire his penetration, he does not, by shewing the parallel, give us also the occasion to admire his learning—pity, above all, since the charge is serious, and if false extremely severe, that he does not by proving it, present the opportunity of praising his liberality—pity, at all events, that as he cites the names of two, I dare say, very learned polemics, he does not also cite their proofs of his bold assertion. *A remarkable paralell between popery and Socinianism!* As for the doctrines of popery, I conceive that I know them full well as Doctor S.; and, as for those of Socinianism, although I am very far from contesting his lordship's erudition, I cannot help believing, from the serious attention which I have given that subject, that my acquaintance with them is not much inferior to his lordship's. And, I do solemnly declare, after considering and comparing the two systems together, in a variety of their bearings, that so far from discovering "*a remarkable parallel*" between them, I, on the contrary, discover *the most remarkable opposition*—so far from finding them *alike*, I find them *unlike* each other in every feature. Having thus positively stated the difference of my opinion from his lordship's, I will appeal to the reader to decide which of us has the most plausible motives for our respective sentiments.

I conceive, then, that for a parallel, above all, a remarkable "parallel" to exist between any two systems of religion, or philosophy, there ought to exist a conformity in their *principles*; or a conformity in the *conclusions*, which they deduce from their principles; or a conformity in their respective tenets, practices, and regulations. Wisdom, surely, will not contest the fairness of these positions; for, besides these objects, there is nothing that constitutes the ingredients of a system. Well; adopting these as the criteria of the comparison of the two systems of popery and Socinianism;—I repeat it;—impartiality and good sense, so far from finding them "remarkably parallel," will find them, in every circumstance, remarkably dissimilar.

As for the *leading principles* of the two systems:—the leading principles of popery is *authority*; the leading principle of Socinianism, *reason*. The papist (I use here, this term, because his lordship frowns upon the appellation of catholic) the papist receives his creed, and is induced to believe it, upon the recommendation of an institute, which he venerates as *infallible*.—The Socinian spurning all the influences of authority, as the intrusions upon liberty, and the violations of the rights of reason, receives his creed, and believes it upon the attestation of his own capacity, and the sanction of his own opinion. So that in their *leading princi-*

ples, there is not certainly any "*remarkable parallel between popery and Socinianism.*"

The conclusions, which the two societies deduce from their respective principles, are, like the principles themselves, not only not remarkably parallel; they are remarkably dissimilar and unlike. Induced by his principles to consider the voice of the church as the dictate of the Holy Ghost, the papist believes and professes whatever she proposes to him, be it ever so impervious to his senses, or impenetrable to his reason. He believes and venerates a variety of mysteries,—not only all the great mysteries of revelation, which the other sects of christianity respect, but, as Dr. Johnson remarks, several others. The Socinian, guided by the supposed sagacity of his own reason, professes to believe nothing which his reason does not comprehend; or, at least, which his reason judges false. He, consequently, admits none of the mysteries of revelation; but melts down the great christian dispensation to a system of human philosophy, level, or nearly level, as he can make it, to the measure of his own understanding. So that, again, as the papist differs from the Socinian most widely in his leading principles, so does he differ, equally widely, from him in the conclusions which he deduces from them. Certainly, there is not in either of these respects, any "*remarkable parallel*" between popery and Socinianism.

In regard of the other appendages of popery, besides those to which I have alluded—its practices and various regulations and forms of discipline—these, as they are hinged upon the belief of mysteries, suppose the mediums of grace, and are the institutions of external authority; they are, consequently, objects of contempt to the Socinian, who deriding mysteries, and the mediums of grace, and the institutions of external authority, as the inventions of priestcraft, and the dictates of superstition, receives no tenets, reveres no practices, respects no regulations and forms of discipline, but what his own wisdom suggests, and the feelings of his own mind approve. So that, once more, as in their principles, and the deductions from their principles, the papist differs from the Socinian, so does he differ from him in every other article of religion. And, is this the “*remarkable parallel*” between popery and Socinianism.

“But,” says his lordship, “the papists, commend the Socinians, and the Socinians reciprocally commend the papists.”—If his lordship mean, by the word “*commend*,” that the papists—admire the principles, or praise the doctrines of the Socinians; or that the Socinians approve the principles, and esteem the doctrines of the papists, I venture to assert it,—his lordship is most egregiously mistaken; and that he will seek in vain, amid the host of papist, or in the school of Socinian writers,

for commendations of this description. Not even will he find them, in the works of his favourite authors, the learned Jameson, or the wise Ruarius. Such commendations imply a total dereliction, and flat denial of their respective tenets. The fact is, there are no such commendations.

And yet, I allow it, the papist does sometimes pay compliments to the Socinians; and like the learned *Reviewer*, and the elegant and acute *Vindicator*, acknowledges that "they are the most consistent of all protestants." I, too, have already made, and repeat that compliment—if it be one. With the *Remarker* and *Vindicator*, I also think the Socinians, not only the most consistent, but the only consistent protestants. But then, I speak of their reasoning, not of their tenets;—or, if I speak of their tenets, I speak of them only as they are deductions from their premissæ, and as they are hinged upon their principles. The Socinians lay it down as their leading principle, and as the basis of their religion,—if it be, indeed, a religion—a principle and basis, which exclude all mystery; therefore, I assert, that as reasoners and philosophers, they ought not, in order to be consequent and consistent, to admit any mystery. Such, precisely, is the situation of the Socinian. He adopts, as his rule of faith, a principle, which is incompatible with the belief of mysteries; and therefore, he rejects mysteries. The principle is

impious: the reasoning is logical. And it is upon the grounds of the reasoning only, that the papist is induced to make any compliments to the Socinian. His compliments merely amount to this; that the Socinian, *as a protestant reasoning upon protestant principles*, reasons more logically than any other sect of protestants.

It is in a similar manner, and upon relatively similar grounds, that the Socinian is, sometimes, pleased to compliment the papist. The papist admits, I have remarked, as the guide and rule of his belief, a principle diametrically opposite to that of the Socinian—the principle *of authority*. He reveres this authority, as *sacred and infallible*; and, therefore, he also reveres whatever comes to him recommended and sanctioned by it, as certain and indubitable.—The Socinian, as a Socinian, rejects and ridicules the popish principle; but, as a reasoner and philosopher, he allows, that if indeed the principle be true, the conclusions which the papist deduces from it are correct:—if authority be the rule of belief, then he owns it, the belief of the catholic is wise, rational and consistent. In philosophy, consistency is placed, not precisely in the truth of the principle, which forms the basis of any system, but in the nice dependence and connection of the reasoning with that principle; and above all, in the accuracy of the deductions from it. Thus, the Socinian, though he rejects authori-

ty, allows that authority is the proper and only basis of mystery. Therefore, he adds, admit it as the rule of belief, and as reasoners, and it is necessary to admit mystery, if it recommend mystery.—It is in this point of view only, that the Socinians allow the catholic the merit of consistency,—as reasoners connecting, philosophically, their conclusions with their premissæ—Indeed, the circumstance is so evident, that the institution of authority renders the belief of mystery consistent—as the rejection of it renders it inconsistent—that not only the Arminians, at the synod of Dort, remarked, that the re-admission of it in the protestant societies, would render the re-admission of popery again necessary; but the deists themselves acknowledge, that if authority be, indeed, the rule of belief, then is catholicity alone rational and consistent.

But, the papist and the Socinian, it is urged, both make use of the same arguments against protestantism. True; but it is still upon the score of inconsistency only; to shew the protestant the pusillanimity of his reasoning, and the incoherence of his belief, in admitting some mysteries and rejecting others; when *by his principles*, according to the Socinian, there is equal reason to reject *all*;—or else, according to the papist, there is as much reason either to reject *all* those, or to receive *all*, which catholicity respects, as there is to reject or receive *a few*.—You pro-

fess, the Socinian says, the same rule of faith which I do, that your reason is the criterion and judge of what it is rational and necessary for you to believe. This rule excludes the belief of *all mystery*; and, therefore, you should, to be consistent, reject as I do, the belief of all mystery.---The papist reasons with him nearly in the same manner. Rejoicing, indeed, at the fortunate prejudice, which induces him to reverence any mysterious truths, he respects, in his credulity, the piety of the christian; but considering him as a reasoner, he derides, in his logic, the inconsistency of the philosopher. You reject, the papist says to him, some of the mysteries of catholicity, because your reason cannot comprehend them; because to your senses, or your imagination, they appear impossible and repugnant; and yet you admit other mysteries, which are just equally incomprehensible; and which to the senses and imaginations of other men, who are equally wise as you are, appear equally impossible, and equally repugnant. You have double weights and double measures. If your reason only be your guide, then should you admit only what reason understands, and admit no mysteries: if aught beside reason be your guide, then is there the same motive for admitting all the mysteries of popery, as there is for admitting some. The mysteries of religion are all of them dark, impenetrable, impervious to the eye of

reason. It is thus, ~~that~~ both the Socinian and the papist argue with the protestant, employing protestant principles and protestant logic to convince him, that whether he combat Socinianism, or popery, or defend his own tenets, his own maxims recoil, always, upon himself, and convict him of inconsistency.—But, behold, compressed into one line, the theory of whatever I have said upon the subject of the motives of belief—a theory, which both the Socinian and the catholic admit—a theory, indeed, which is evidently the dictate of wisdom and sound philosophy. It is this: There are but two mediums of belief, *reason* and *authority*. *Authority where it is infallible*, renders the belief of mystery rational; and it is the attestation of the divinity of catholicity. *Reason*, not being competent to understand supernatural truths, excludes, of course, when adopted as the rule of belief, the belief of mysteries. Followed timidly, reason is the proof of Socinianism. Followed boldly, it is the source of deism. This is what, after thus noticing the Bishop of Durham's illiberal notes, I shall proceed to demonstrate.

It is with error as it is with vice, and with every other principle of mischief—it is never stationary and fixed. Error is sure to produce error; and proceeding, always, from bad to worse, is sure, in its progress, either to destroy some remaining maxim of religion, or to add to the code of im-

piety, some new maxim of irreligion. It is, sometimes, at first, a gentle stream, which filtering insensibly through the mounds, which had restrained it, gradually washes them away; and swelling soon, by the reception of other streams, to a torrent, lays waste and ravages the fields, the harvests, and the smiling habitations of the cottager and the swain. The latter part of this description is the picture of Socinianism and deism. Socinianism soon produced deism. Indeed, the distance between the two systems is so trifling—a mere step, at most—that deism appeared immediately after the introduction of Socinianism. The deists have the candor to make the Socinians the compliment of calling them their masters: and, as Mosheim observes, the connection between the two societies is so obvious, that not the most inexpert genealogist could mistake their generation and close affinity. Prateolus, and some other historians, call the deists a sect of protestants. And, certainly, the incessant compliments which the deists and first reformers were wont to pay each other, were almost alone sufficient to give colour to Patreolus's supposition. At all events, Socinianism is evidently the parent of deism; as protestantism is the parent of Socinianism. The difference between the two systems is not the difference of any fundamental principles, nor any difference in the manner of applying their principles; not any difference in the mode of reason-

ing, nor in the motives upon which they ground their belief. The sole difference consists in the deduction of a less or greater number of conclusions from the same antecedent—from an antecedent, which equally contains all their conclusions, whether they be deduced or not.—The following is the mode of reasoning of these two systems—and indeed of protestantism also—and points out the resemblance and coincidence between these sources of incredulity. Led by the maxim, that his reason and his senses are the guides of faith, and that he should believe nothing that appears repugnant to their dictates, the protestant rejects *some* of the mysteries of popery,—transubstantiation, for example—because his reason does not comprehend it, or his senses penetrate it. Thus, does Archbishop Secker, and the late Bishop Porteus—and, indeed, the generality of protestants, reason upon this mystery; *“If we cannot be sure,”* say the two former prelates, *“of what our senses tell us, we can be sure of nothing; our senses tell us, that no change of the substance takes place in the papist mystery of the Eucharist, therefore, no change does take place.”*—Conducted by the same maxims, the Socinian discusses the mysteries of protestantism; and because they are incomprehensible to his reason, and impenetrable to his senses, he rejects them.—Under the influence of the same axioms, the deist examines the tenets of Socinianism; and again, ex-

actly, for the same motives as the above, because he does not understand them, he places them upon the list of errors. Thus is deism a small extension of Socinianism, as Socinianism is the extension of the general system of protestantism. The principles, the basis, the reasoning, the motives, the evidences, are in each system, precisely similar. And if the protestant rule of faith be true, that reason is the arbiter of belief, and should believe nothing which it cannot comprehend, why is not deism, which only applies this rule to a greater variety of objects than the protestant and the Socinian, but to objects to which it is equally applicable, as it is to those to which they refer it—why is not deism the most consistent of all these systems?

As an elegant elucidation of this important question,—and, indeed, of whatever almost I have said, respecting the tendency of protestant principles—I will here subjoin a few reflections of the eloquent French Academician Gaillard, in his life of Francis the first.

“The human mind,” says Gaillard, “admits only two arbiters of belief—reason and authority. One of the most noble functions of reason is to feel its own impotence, and the want in which it stands of a guide to conduct and help it. In matters of religion, reason does not reach beyond the boundaries of natural religion. Mysteries being placed out

of its sphere, surpass its comprehension; and, therefore, if it admit them, it admits them only as objects of faith, decided by divine authority. Reason, it is true, conducts to this authority, by proving, in the first place, that it is necessary; and secondly, by evincing, that it should possess those marks and evidences, by which it cannot be mistaken. Thus, referred by reason to authority, we penetrate under its unerring guidance into the dogmas and mysteries of revelation; and enter into the regions and empire of faith. If the unbeliever reject these dogmas and mysteries, merely because he does not understand them, I consider him a daring madman, who requiring two guides, obstinately persists in taking only one; and one too, which admonishes him incessantly to take another, and another surer than itself. He errs, because he gives too much to reason; believing nothing beyond the sphere of his own weak and contracted understanding. However, he is in this, neither inconsequent nor absurd: at least, he is not inconsequent and absurd, in the same degree as the reasoning theologian, who owning the inefficiency of reason, and the consequent necessity of authority, and who, receiving dogmas and mysteries, combats the authority, modifies the dogmas, alters the mysteries, so that they still remain mysteries, but cease to be supported upon the basis of sufficient authority to render them the objects of faith and veneration. Consistency and

wisdom, then, should reason in this manner:—If nothing ought to be believed, but what reason comprehends—if it be false, that reason itself admonishes us to obey the injunctions of authority, then, it is certain, that it is necessary to reject all mysteries entirely, and all the dogmas of revelation; it is reasonable even to allow, that the incredulity of the unbeliever is wiser than the faith of the believer. But if reason be too feeble to conduct us in the paths of truth, and authority be necessary to lead us securely in them, then it becomes criminal to change the oracles of such authority; and it is our duty, without restriction or modification, to adore the mysteries which it proposes and enforces. It is certainly, profane in man to change or touch the work of God. Wherefore, when Luther, for example, proposes to me to substitute consubstantiation in the room of transubstantiation, to what tribunal does he refer me? To authority?—But authority is completely against him. To reason?—But reason understands as little of consubstantiation, as of transubstantiation. When another reasoning dogmatist tells me, that Christ is present in the Eucharist *by faith*, I ask him, what he means by *a presence by faith*? Either Christ is present, or he is not present. If he be not present, then my faith cannot render him present; and, of course, I do wrong to believe him present. If he be present, then my faith has no-

thing to do with bringing him there; and he is equally present, whether I believe it, or believe it not. And, where then is the wisdom of your reasoning? If you do not emancipate my reason; if you still leave it subjected to a yoke, let this yoke be, not the profane one which you hold out, but one that is sacred and divine. Mystery for mystery—I am not able to believe any mystery, which is not proposed to me by a competent authority. You undertake too much, and too little. Either retrench nothing, or retrench all, that reason does not understand; if reason itself can assent to such retrenchment. The deist wanders further, it is true, from the paths of salvation, than you do. But he is also nearer re-entering the paths of salvation, than you are. His mode of reasoning is more rational and consistent; and let him only once feel the necessity of authority to direct him, he will yield implicit submission to its directions, without any of those ridiculous reservations, which modify your creeds.—Such is the point of view, in which wisdom contemplates the vague opinions of heresy, and those unphilosophic alterations, which Luther, Calvin, and the reformers have thought proper to intrude into the doctrines of the church.”*

* In another part of the work he makes the following similar observations:—

“If there be not in the church any living and infallible

I have then, I think, made it pretty manifest, that protestantism is the parent of deism. It only remains for me to shew, also,---although it is almost needless for me to do it, such is its evidence---that deism is the parent of nearly every other species of infidelity, from Pyrrhonism, through immaterialism, to the monster of impiety, atheism. The circumstance is so true, that the authors of the Great Encyclopedia,---and who are, perhaps, the most competent of all judges upon this subject---remark, that when once the mind has adopted the creed of deism, "*it soon and inevitably* adopts the still more

authority, then it is evidently right, that each one should believe, exactly, what he pleases. Be Sabellian, Arian, Nestorian, Eutychian, Lutheran, or Calvinist.—Be deist, if deism be more agreeable to your reason. Every thing, in such case, is allowed you, because no one has the right to censure or control you. But, if in the church, there be a living and infallible authority, then, disbelief, or liberty, is no longer a thing of choice. The unreserved belief of her doctrines, in such case, is necessary."

"In religion, one of these two points is necessary; either with the catholic to acknowledge an infallible authority, which decides upon questions, without appeal; or with the deist, to consider and admit reason as the sole arbiter of opinion.—There is no medium between the two; and therefore, upon this question, there is no consistent man, who is not either a catholic or a deist:—he can discover no other resource; or as Gaillard expresses it: *un esprit consequent n'apperoit pas un tiers parte.*"

dreadful code of atheism.” They ground their remark, both upon the nature of deism, and the testimony of experience,—for experience shews, that nearly all who had once professed the doctrines of deism, terminated the career of their errors by professing those of atheism. In reality, the distance between deism and atheism is extremely short—a mere step—although it be a step down the precipice of the deepest of all abysses; and the motives which urge the deist to take that step, while similar, *in reason*, to those which induce the protestant to become Socinian, and the Socinian deist, are, on the side of passion, most eloquent and persuasive. Passion, there is no doubt, is a great source of atheism. But passion apart, it is obvious, that the mere principles of deism would alone conduct the deist to the impiety of atheism. The principles of deism are merely these, that reason is the arbiter of belief; and that it should believe nothing which it does not comprehend. The deist applies these principles to the religion of nature; and he discovers, that it has its mysteries, as well as revelation; and that the same objections, which apply to the latter, are applicable to the former; consequently, he concludes, that if he have been consistent in rejecting the latter, because he did not understand it, he has no other alternative, if he wish to continue consistent, but, in like manner, to reject the former. And certainly, reasoning

upon those dreadful principles, who will say, that he reasons unphilosophically? Whoever admits a principle, which excludes all mystery, is reduced, if he will reason and act upon it, to admit and adopt the consequences which it contains; and, therefore, to discard and reject every scheme and system of religion, which includes the belief of mystery. Atheism is the natural result of such principle—the last link in the chain of reasoning, which not only the passions and prejudices of the deist, but his philosophy and consistency append very easily to it. I conceive every thing horrible included in the pernicious principle, that a man should only believe what his reason can understand, and his senses penetrate.*

*I have in my illustration, like many other writers, denominated the successions of infidelity *the genealogy of infidelity*, appearing to consider each preceding form of incredulity, as the parent of that which succeeded it. Such idea, though general, is not correct. For, although, it is true, that the generation of infidelity was progressive, yet was it not exactly the preceding infidelity, which was the parent of the subsequent infidelity. Each earlier form of impiety contributed, if you please, to the generation of that which soon succeeded it. But the sole parent, in reality, of the whole offspring of infidelity, is the leading maxims of the reformation, that belief is free, and that reason should believe only what reason comprehends. The profaneness of the Socinian, the impiety of the deist, the irreligion of the atheist, each grow, not upon each other, nor as grafts upon each other's errors, but as the natural and genuine offspring

I said, in the third place, that the principles of the reformation, besides being the sources of infidelity, have been acknowledged such by many protestant writers, and are considered such by the school of incredulity itself.—I have, indeed, already produced in the series of my illustrations, several attestations from Mosheim, sufficient to convince the reader of the truth of the first part of my assertion—attestations, in which that learned, though partial, historian, acknowledges, that “*there prevails among the various sects of the reformation, the most latitudinarian principles and impious doctrines.*” “Many protestant writers,” says Kett, “in his View of the Prophecies, addressed the infidels in a style of compliment upon their discernment; quitted the strong holds of scripture doctrine—advanced to meet them upon their own ground, and argued upon what they called *the principles of natural religion solely.* They granted that faith depends, not upon the will, but the un-
of this maxim. “*Whatever,*” says Bayle, “*I either believe or disbelieve, I believe and disbelieve upon the principles of protestantism; and I consider myself,*” he one day said to Polignac, “*as the most rational of protestants, because led by protestant principles, I protest, equally, against all systems and all sects.*” Hence, instead of calling the successions of infidelity *the genealogy of infidelity*, I had, perhaps, better have termed them *the chronology of infidelity*; giving them all one common parent, and making them differ only in age, imperfections, and deformity.

derstanding; that when the evidence for the truth of any proposition is full and clear, it constrains assent; but that no blame is imputable for rejecting a proposition, for which the mind can see no evidence; and that we are not called upon to believe what we cannot comprehend."

Let me, on the occasion of these words, just, en passant, remark to his Lordship of Durham, that if, indeed, there exist a striking parallel between popery and Socinianism, because the papist and the Socinian pay each other a few mutual compliments upon their modes of reasoning, what a much more striking parallel is there here acknowledged between protestantism and infidelity—a parallel, not consisting in mere reciprocal compliments, but in similar principles, and similar reasoning, and similar conclusions! Here, the parallel lines are bold, prominent, and tangible. Surely, even his lordship would own it, if his mathematical notions are not singularly inverted, that, if indeed "popery and Socinianism be parallel,"—although their principles and conclusions be, in every respect, unlike—merely on account of a few unmeaning compliments, then are protestantism and infidelity very "strikingly parallel," which to the tribute of compliments, add parallel principles and parallel conclusions.

In the same manner that Kett acknowledges, that the protestants reasoned upon the grounds of

infidelity, he also candidly owns, that the infidels reasoned upon the grounds of protestantism. "We must observe," he says, "that infidelity masked itself with many of the principles which gave birth to, or at least brought forward, the reformation." Hence, he allows, as Robison does also, with several protestant writers, that "*most of the innovations and impious doctrines*, which were circulated, particularly throughout Germany, and in general through all the kingdoms of Europe, were the *work of protestant divines*."—Speaking of protestantism in Germany, and of the too obvious effects of protestant principles, Robison says, with great truth, and with much good sense, "The catholics accused the protestants of infidelity, respecting the fundamental doctrines of christianity, which they professed to believe; and even with respect to the doctrines of natural religion. This accusation was long very slightly supported; but, of late, by better proofs. The spirit of free inquiry was the great boast of the protestants, and their only support against the catholics. It was, therefore, encouraged by their governments. It was not to be wondered at, that it should be indulged to excess, or improperly, even by serious men, liable to error, in their disputes with the catholics. In the progress of this contest, even their own confessions did not escape criticism; and it was asserted, that the reformation which

those confessions express, was not complete. Further reformati^ons were proposed. The scriptures,—the foundation of faith—were examined by clergymen of different capacities, dispositions and views; till by explaining, correcting, allegorizing, and otherwise twisting the bible, men's minds had hardly any thing left to rest on, as a doctrine of revealed religion. This encouraged others to go farther; and to say, that revelation was a solecism; as plainly appeared by the irreconcilable differences among those enlighteners (for so they were called) of the public; and that man has nothing to trust to, but the dictates of natural reason. Another set of writers, proceeding from this, as a point already settled, proscribed all religion whatever; and openly taught the doctrines of immaterialism and atheism. *Most of these innovations were the work of protestant divines, from the causes that I have mentioned.*”* What a luminous illustration of what I have been proving in the series of this note, respecting the natural consequences and effects of protestant principles! With the same candor, Robison acknowledges—and so also does Kett—that the poison which flowed through different kingdoms, was almost entirely circulated “by the industry of protestant printers, with the permission of protestant governments.” “The great infidel academy,” he says, “in the principality of Anhalt Des-

* Robison, Proofs of Conspiracy.

sau, was conducted entirely by professed Lutherans and Calvinists; for though destined," he adds, "for catholics also, not a catholic would enter it."

But let us now observe, in what light the pretended school of philosophy is wont to consider protestantism, and the professors of protestant principles. It is true, the philosophists do often reproach the protestants with timidity in not following up their own principles; and with inconsistency in their deductions; still they often compliment them with the appellations of philosophers, and of the parents of modern philosophy,—they frequently call them brothers; admitting the same principles, and differing only in the hardihood and extent of their application. I refer the reader to the works of nearly any of our modern infidels. There he will find, that while these men hurl the thunders of their eloquence, or point the artillery of their wit at popery and the papist—to protestantism and the protestant, they are all liberality and commendation. They are lavish, in particular, of their admiration and praises of this nation. They always seem to look upon it, as a nation of philosophers. "*England is ours*," was the ordinary expression of their opinion, and confidence in its wisdom. "*By its aid*," Voltaire used often to repeat, "*we shall destroy christianity*." "*England*," he says, "*and Switzerland are over-run with men, who hate and despite christianity, like Julian himself*." And

Weishaupt, speaking of the reception which his impieties met with in this country, remarks, "I cannot help laughing, when I think of the ready reception which my doctrines have met with from the grave divines of England and Germany. I wonder how Williams failed, when he attempted to establish a deistical worship in London; for I am certain it must have been acceptable to that learned and free people." It is, almost, in similar terms, that these men speak of other protestant principles in the propagation of philosophy. D'Alembert, in pointing out the sources of what he calls philosophy, places the great principle of protestantism as its leading maxim, and "the diffusion of protestants" he adds, "is one of the causes of its progress." Speaking of Geneva, he says, "In Calvin's town, there are but a few shabby, beggarly fellows, that believe in Christ." Frederick, the infidel king of Prussia, contemplating the propagation of his favourite system, laments, that in catholic countries (it was the case at that period) it made slow progress; but consoles himself, at the view of its rapid diffusion in the protestant states. "*In our protestant countries,*" he exultingly observes, "*we go on briskly.*" But, the best of attestations of the sentiments and esteem, which the school of philosophy entertained for protestantism and the protestant—and of the aversion which it nourished for catholicity and the catholic—is the conduct of

the leaders of the late eventful revolution in France. Their conduct is the forcible expression—because the expression of an immense body of these men—of the real and comparative estimation, in which they held the principles and members of the two communities. I hardly need to say it—they not only tolerated, *they caressed protestantism! Catholicity, they persecuted and laboured to destroy!* So that, here again—again were I to reason, as does his lordship of Durham, that “compliments prove parallel systems;” how much more strikingly parallel, must even protestant partiality allow it, are the protestant and infidel schools, than those of catholicity and impiety. At all events, the above opinions of the philosophists demonstrate invincibly, what, in the third place, I had asserted, “that they considered the principles of protestantism as the sources of incredulity, and the occasion of its diffusion.”

Having thus conducted the reader through the three positions which I had laid down, as the subject of this illustration, I might here close it with propriety. However, before I do it, I will return a superficial answer to a calumny, which, of late, has been frequently urged against our holy religion; and urged too, with considerable asperity, by the respectable prelate, to whom I have so often alluded—a calumny, which owes its origin to the ingenuity of hostility; its propagation to malevo-

lence, and its belief to ignorance.----“It is the absurdity of popery,” it is said, “which has given occasion, if not to the generation, at least to much of the growth and propagation of impiety:—the professors of that superstition being induced to contemplate its contradictions, abandoned it with contempt, to take up the apparently more rational creeds of deism and infidelity.” It is not my design even to pause here, to shew the futility and falsehood of these assertions; or to prove, that there is nothing absurd in the creed of popery. Our creed is absurd only to those who do not know it; and who have not studied the nature and tendency of its doctrines—absurd to those, whose reason is the dupe of passion, and who feel it inconvenient to observe its dictates. But this is what I contend, in answer to the above objections, that if indeed the absurdity of a creed be one of the causes of infidelity, then have some of the protestant creeds—the creeds even of those men, whom the protestants revere, as “the envoys of heaven, and the organs of truth”—the fairest claims to the dreadful pre-eminence of having most largely contributed to its diffusion. It is to the credit of protestants, in general, I have before remarked, that notwithstanding their enthusiasm in praising the apostles of the reformation, they have the pious inconsistency to reject many of their tenets, and the virtue to detest several of their maxims. As for some of

the multifarious creeds of the reformation, I am sure the question would not be contested,—that there are among them several absurd and impious, in the extreme—absurd and impious as aught that is recorded in the long dark annals of folly and fanaticism, of superstition and incredulity. I will not, however, appeal to these. Of these, some, I hope, have become obsolete from their absurdity; some have, now, only perhaps a few deluded fanatics for their admirers.—It is to the creeds of the great apostles of the reformation that I confidently appeal, for the proof of my assertion; which even I, with equal confidence, conceive I shall establish by producing, not the whole creeds, but a few specimens only of their various doctrines. The reader who wishes to form an adequate and perfectly correct idea of the tenets of these men should consult their writings.—*Luther* teaches, for example, that “*free will is an empty name, and that man sins mortally, when even he does his best.*” *—he asserts, that “*God works in us both good and evil;*” †—he maintains that, “*God damns those who have not deserved damnation;*” ‡—he says, “*where the scriptures command us to do works, they forbid us to do good works; because we cannot do them.*” § Similar to these are many of the doctrines of the apostle Calvin. He, too, teaches that “*God*

* De Captiv. Bab.—† De Cap. Bab.—‡ De Cap. Bab.—§ Tom. 3.

created the greatest part of the world, in order that he might damn them.”—L. de Præd. He makes God *“the author of all sin.”*—L. de Præd. He affirms, that *“all sins are mortal;”* and that, *“the best of our works deserve damnation.”*—Id. The above is not even an etching of their creeds.—But they are enough to evince this; that if indeed the absurdity of any creed have, really, been the cause of the growth of impiety, then should creeds, like the above, or tenets like the above, have contributed, very largely, to its propagation. Indeed, placing the above doctrines by the side of the doctrines of atheism itself, I have no hesitation in saying it:—if good sense and piety had to determine which is the most absurd and impious, they would give the greater absurdity and impiety to the doctrines of the two apostles: for it is better, and less irrational—horrible and irrational as it is—to allow with the atheists, that there exists no God at all, than with Luther and Calvin, to believe that there exists a God, “who damns us without deserving it,—who damns us for our good works,—who created, in order that he might damn us; and who, yet, is himself the author of all our sins, and the cause of all our crimes.” Certainly, it is less irrational to believe, that no God exists, than that there exists an unjust one. “The former notion,” Bacon observes, “is unbelief; the latter is contumely.” And hence is the code of atheism less

absurd, than is that of the apostles of protestantism.

I do seriously recommend to the Bishop of Durham, when next he attempts to demonstrate either the parallel between popery and Socinianism or to prove that popery is one of the causes of impiety—I recommend to him to study, more correctly than he appears to have done, the principles of parallels, and nature of popish doctrines. I think, that the if his lordship's mind be open to the irradiations of wisdom, he will trace contrasts, where he now traces parallels; and the sources of piety, where now he traces the causes of corruption. I recommend him to modesty, at all events, in his censures of our doctrines; lest, since the doctrines of protestantism are themselves open to reproach, the papist, too, should attempt to make out parallels, and reverberate censure. I hope it is not true, that

Nescit redire, qui periit pudor.

I also recommend to Doctor B. and to every other protestant, this final observation, which has more analogy to the substance of this note, than the above remark—that if, under the guidance of the leading maxim of the pretended reformation, its apostles themselves—great, good, learned, and holy men!—if they not only erred, but sunk into the lowest abysses of impiety,—how easy, how very

easy it is to account for the errors of their followers; who frequently are neither great, nor good, nor earned, nor holy men; but who, equally with their apostles, are allowed to follow the dictates of their own opinion.—And how easy, too, from the errors of the followers of these men to account for the growth of all subsequent impiety!

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On the inconsistency of protestant creeds, &c.

By the constitution of the protestant religion,—I have often shewn it,—every individual is the judge and arbiter of his own belief—himself a tribunal supreme and independent, to which alone, in case of doubt, it is necessary to appeal, and by whose authority alone, in case of appeal, the evidence of the question should be determined. As for every other species of authority—councils, synods, jurisdictions, creeds—these, by the most solemn decree which the reformation ever made, were declared to be the tyrant inventions and institutions of popery, and the buttresses of superstition—fallible essentially, because human; and the instruments of error, because directed by men, whose interest it was to deceive. In short, that there was not, at the period of the reformation,—

that there is not, at the present period, any infallible, living, speaking authority, capable of determining the true sense of the holy scriptures, and of chaining down the belief and opinion of the faithful, is the first maxim of the reformation; and the basis of the whole fabric of protestantism. “*Whoever,*” say Luther and Calvin, “*believes ought upon the decision of any exterior authority, believes under the influence of mere prejudice.*”

It is here that I might a moment pause to remark how very widely protestant maxims differ from protestant practice. Who would suppose, that with maxims like the above, exploding councils, creeds, and canons—who would suppose, that the protestant would not spurn every thing of the nature? But who could suppose, that he would lean his faith upon the very objects which he thus so solemnly rejects? Inconsistency is a stale and common circumstance in the annals of heresy; else would such contradictions as the above excite astonishment. However, such was, and such the case is, still. Scarce, by the noise of invective, the captivating sounds of liberty, and the disingenuity of misrepresentation, had the conductors of the reformation detached the restless, the violent, and the credulous from the authority of the ancient church, but in imitation of all revolutionists, their next solicitude was to attach them to themselves, and to cement the power which

their boldness had created. The thing, as the experience of every revolution shews it, is not so difficult. When once the passions of the vulgar are roused, and perplexity is excited in their minds, then is the moment for ambition and dexterity to establish their dominion. The vulgar reason little; and never govern themselves. Dreadful as the lion and the tiger, to their supposed enemies, they are tame and passive as the lamb, to the bold enthusiast, who has the eloquence to seduce, or the energy to command them. They are a flock which he drives before him, blindly obeying the impulse of his passions. Thus, revolutions, which always begin under the specious name of reformatations, nearly always end in establishing a power more arbitrary than that which it was their pretended object to reform,—and in establishing it, too, upon the very platform, and with the very materials of that which they had just before pulled down. The reformers, I observed, had discarded the authority of synods, councils, creeds, &c. as the buttresses of tyranny, and the intrusions upon rational and christian liberty; but no sooner were they possessed of sufficient influence over the minds of their followers, than, anxious to retain that influence, or apprehensive of losing it, they began immediately to call back and re-establish the mediums, which by experience, they knew were calculated to support it. They knew that synods, councils, creeds,

were of this description---the sources of subordination, and the ties of unity, They, therefore, as assembled synods, called together consistories, formed creed, canons, and various regulations. They issued these as the laws and sanction of the Deity; not merely proposing them to the veneration of the public, but pressing them upon their acceptance, ---and not only pressing, but *forcing* them upon their acceptance---obliging them even to *swear* to their firm belief and sincere acquiescence in them. This was the case in France, in Germany, in Holland, in Sweden, at Geneva, and almost in every other state where protestantism had formed an establishment.

In France, the synods obliged each minister to swear, that he believed all their decisions, and would believe them till his death. Such were the constitutions of the synod of Saumur, and of several others. The synod of Alet, in 1620, and that of Charenton, in 1623, employed the influences of their authority so imperiously, as to oblige all ministers not only to subscribe, but to *swear*, that they believed *all* the points of faith which had been determined even by the foreign synod of Dort. The form of the oath was as follows:---Ego N. N. Juro et assevero, in conspectu Dei et hujus sancti conventûs me recipere, approbare et amplecti omnes doctrinas propositas et decisas, in synodo Dordracinâ, utpote perfecté congruentes verbo Dei et

ecclesiarum nostrarum confessioni. Juro et promitto, me in harum doctrinarum professione, per omnem vitam perseveraturum, eamque pro virili parte defensurum, nec ab eâ unquam vel prædicando, vel docendo, vel scribendo, recessurum esse. Atque ita me Deus juvet; et mihi propitius sit. Juro hæc omnia sine ambiguitate, equivocatione, vel restrictione mentali. The above oath should certainly appear an inconsistency, when it is recollected, that the principle of faith in the French churches, as well as in every other reformed church, is the authority of private opinion. However, in the above oath, and in the decrees of all the synods which I have mentioned, there is this to extenuate the inconsistency,—that at least, the doctrines which they forced upon the belief of the ministers, had been previously discussed, and solemnly determined; consequently, that in believing them they could form a judgment, whether or not they were consonant to reason, or agreeable, in their notions, to the dictates of the sacred scriptures. Well; but behold now an inconsistency, which has not even this, or any other meagre apology to extenuate it—an inconsistency which is paralleled by nothing but its indecency. Not only were the French protestant clergy obliged to swear to decisions, which their synods had already regulated, but in some instances to decrees and creeds, which, so far from being regulated, were not yet proposed,

nor perhaps even thought on! It was the established rule, that whoever should attend the national synod, or send a delegate in his room, should, in either case, take an oath, "*that he would believe and embrace all the articles which the synod should decree.*" The reader may consult the acts of the synod of Rochelle, in 1607; of Tonneres, in 1617; of Gass et Vitré, in the same year. In the synod of Vitré, the form of the oath, which the members took previously to its decisions, was this: "*We promise in the sight of God, that we will embrace all whatever this holy assembly shall conclude and determine; and with all our strength we will labour to observe and execute it: since we are fully convinced, that God will preside over its members by his Holy Spirit; and by the rule of his word, conduct them into all truth and equity, for the salvation of his church.*"

And then, too, not only did these assemblies, thus conducted, forsooth! "*into all truth and equity for the salvation of the church*"—not only did they exert the prerogatives of their jurisdiction, in regulating and enforcing their fundamental tenets, or those which distinguish them from the parent church, they exerted them also, and in the most arbitrary manner—in a manner which hardly their infallibility would have justified—in respect of very inferior objects, the trifling controversies which subsisted among themselves, and insignificant

points of discipline. In the former cases,—of their mutual controversies—we find that often, in the warmth or intemperance of their zeal, they excommunicated many of their most distinguished members; and in the latter cases—of the enactment or enforcement of their points of discipline—we trace a measure of severity, which, at these times at least, is rather calculated to awaken contempt, than establish piety. They ordained, for example, that whoever danced, taught dancing, or was present at a dance; whoever painted, or wore false hair, as an ornament—whoever played at cards, used dice, &c. &c.—should, if they persisted in their wickedness, be solemnly excommunicated. And each pastor was obliged to swear, that he would zealously enforce these important modes of discipline.

It is useless for me to point out in each distinct establishment the methods which the political, much more than religious wisdom of their members deemed it necessary to employ, in order to maintain, *professedly*, the purity and unity of faith, but, *in reality*, their newly acquired authority. These methods were, indeed, every where very strikingly alike—every where resembling the constitutions and provisions which I have just delineated. Oaths, subscriptions, tests, &c. were the ties which linked the clergy to each other, and to their respective institutions; while censures, excommunications, and anathemas awed the vulgar, either to belief, to silence,

or to fear. The Lutherans, according to Mosheim, were compelled to conform to Luther's catechism, to the book of concord, and symbolic books. The Calvinists, as I have shewn was the case in France, every where beheld the sin of disbelieving Calvinistic tenets hung round with all the terrific horrors of damnation.—Yes, and not even where the horrors of damnation, and all the spiritual provisions which I have mentioned, considered sufficiently powerful to preserve unimpaired the integrity of the new codes of faith, or to keep inviolate the respectability of the upstart pastors. Recourse was had, Mosheim allows and laments it, to arguments, which experience proves are far more efficacious with the generality of mankind—to corporal punishments, to exiles, to imprisonments, and in some cases, even to death. By these severe methods, the Lutherans enforced the formulary of union drawn up at Berg and Turgaw. The unfortunate Crellius was put to death, and fell the victim to the piety or imprudence of favouring the contrary doctrines. So, also, it was at Geneva, under the immediate jurisdiction of the *mild apostle Calvin*. He, under the pain of the most awful censures, obliged his deluded followers to believe his tenets; and as the Lutherans treated Crellius, condemned Servetus to the stake, because he had not the good sense to believe as he did.

It is a fact, that few protestants know the principles of protestantism; as it is, equally a fact, that hardly any follow them. Did the protestant give himself the trouble to study the nature of his own principles, or if knowing them, did he only superficially remark their bearings, he would be reduced to own---could an honest confession be extorted---that the facts and circumstances which I have cited, are palpable contradictions both to their nature and their bearings.---To proscribe the influences of authority, as acts of tyranny, and yet, instantly recal them to buttress the very establishment which proscribed them---to condemn synods, &c. as the schools of superstition, and yet, immediately after, proclaim them the organs of the Holy Ghost---to discard creeds as the violations of christian liberty, and yet, every where, employ them as the instruments of control---to declare the scriptures the sole rule of faith, and the sole depositum of religion; their sense, plain, palpable, and easy; and the reason of each individual their best interpreter, and yet, in every place, superadd new codes and new confessions; at every period introduce new interpretations, and intrude them upon the credulity of the public---if this be not violation of consistency, and the opposition of protestant practice to protestant principle, let wisdom say, what then consistency and contradiction mean.---There is even an indecency of contradiction in all

this, which is equalled only by the indecency of the solemnity, with which these contradictions were enforced.

The mere circumstance of contradiction in an interest so vitally important as that of religion, is a serious, awful consideration. It proves invincibly that the men and the institutions that were guilty of it, were not under the guidance of that Holy Spirit, whose movements and ways are all consistency and wisdom.---But the manner, also, I have remarked, in which the contradictions of the reformers were enforced, was perhaps more grossly indecent than the contradictions themselves. They are, indeed, not only a mockery of the principles of the reformation, but of the principles too of religion. By the fundamental principles of the reformation, so often cited, all assemblies of men, however composed, or however wise and holy may be their characters, are fallible; and, just like individuals, liable to error. The consequence is—and it is an obvious consequence—that their determinations cannot form a fixed basis of belief, nor be the foundation upon which piety can repose in undisturbed security. The determinations of fallible men may, because they are also fallible, be false, foolish, impious, or absurd. That they have often been such, will be acknowledged by whoever is acquainted with the history of protestant conventions or protestant creeds. Hence, if with such

principles, and under such circumstances, it be inconsistent and improper even to propose such determinations, as systems of faith to the public acceptance, how great ought to appear and is the inconsistency and impropriety, not merely to propose, but force them upon their acceptance—and force them too, by methods the most powerful that human policy, and the most impressive, that religion know? This, at all events, is reducing men to swear, or acknowledge, that they believe that to be true and divine, which, by the most fundamental of their maxims, they acknowledge *may*, at least, be false or impious. And, what is this, but sporting with the sacred solemnity of an oath?—To my notions and perceptions of decorum, there is nothing that can justify either the power that compels, or the individual who suffers himself to be compelled, to take an oath, but the evidence and conviction, that what he swears is certain. In the case, therefore, of religion, what alone could justify the establishment which exacts, or the individual who gives the sacred pledge of an oath, that he believes any form of faith to be divine, is the infallibility of the power which dictates such form; and in the individual who swears to it, the acknowledgement of such infallibility. The oath is at best rash, which has not certainty for its guide—and *this certainty, in regard of faith, infallibility alone can give.* It is so in the catholic church; what alone justifies the

catholic church for obliging her members to believe her tenets, or excuses her members for believing them, is the assurance of her infallibility. Take that away, and you take away her right to control belief—you render her attempt to control belief an act of tyranny—you render any oaths by which her members attest their belief of her doctrines, very heinous acts of disrespect to the Divinity. For, I repeat it, it is wrong for any individual to swear, as it is wrong to oblige him to swear, that aught is true, which very possibly, or very probably, may be false—it is disrespectful to the Deity to invoke his sacred name in attestation of the firm belief and pious veneration of a tenet, which perhaps may be nonsense, perhaps impiety. And, hence I conclude, on the principles of reason and religion, that since the protestant establishments possess no absolute certitude, that the doctrines which they teach are true—since they can impart no conviction of such certitude to their members, it is wrong in the former to require, and wrong in the latter to give the awful attestation of an oath, that they venerate them as divine;—while, as I have shewn also, both are repugnant to the maxims of the reformation.

In this country, the establishment does not exact from its clergy the testimony of an oath, that they believe its tenets. It exacts only a subscription of its creed. This creed is contained in its thirty-nine

articles---articles comprehending a great multiplicity of subjects---the whole, or nearly the whole variety of tenets; which are supposed to have been revealed, along with many moral obligations, metaphysical speculations, and intricate and obscure opinions. These, all, who are admitted into orders, are required by law to subscribe, declaring that they conscientiously, and *ex animo*, believe the doctrines which they contain.

It is not mine to determine what may be the difference between an appeal which is made to the Divinity under the formulary of an oath, and the attestation which is made under the solemnity of a subscription. Certain it is, that a very considerable portion of the establishment---men of great talents, piety, and erudition, have considered them as synonymous, or nearly synonymous things.* While, indeed, it is equally certain, that another portion of the establishment, and men too of equal talents and erudition, have given a latitude of interpretation to the act of subscription, which takes from it not only the moral tie of any thing like an oath, but leaves the subscriber the same liberty of opinion, as if he had not subscribed at all. Feeling, as every consistent protestant must do, that

*“The articles,” says Dr. Prettyman (now Tomlin) are to be subscribed in their plain and obvious sense, and assent given to them simply and unequivocally, *else, the subscriber incurs the wrath of God.*”—Elen. vol. 2d.

whatever stints the freedom of belief is a violation of protestant principles, these gentlemen, with more ingenuity I think than piety, have devised a variety of shifts and evasions, in order to reconcile, as they imagine, the maxims of the reformation with the obligations and forms of the subscription. "The articles," they say, "are mere articles of peace; which a man may subscribe without believing them, provided he teach nothing that is contrary to them." "They admit," these reasoners add, "such great variety of interpretation, that it could never have been the design of the great and good men who originally framed them, to fetter down reason to believe them in one sense only--- never their intention to tyrannize over liberty, &c. &c." There is hardly in the annals of casuistry, and sophistic subtilty, aught more artful than the arguments which these gentlemen have employed to reconcile the necessity of subscription with the liberty of belief--that is, to prove that a man may solemnly attest, that he unfeignedly, and *ex animo*, believes what he really, and from his soul disbelieves! Does not such logic suggest to the mind the feeling of something more analagous to its ideas of worldly philosophy, than to its notions of christian piety?

If, therefore, as the piety and good sense of a multitude of the establishment suppose—if the formality of subscribing its articles imply an obligation

of believing them, then, of course, the system of subscription is a system of control; and the subscriber is just as much chained to the belief of the tenets which he subscribes, as the catholic is tied to believe the doctrines of catholicity. I see only this difference between them—but it is a difference which should appear very humiliating to the protestant—that whilst the catholic is tied to the belief of tenets, which he is confident are true, because they are recommended to him by an authority, which he is confident is infallible—the protestant subscriber, on the contrary, is fettered to the belief of tenets, which he acknowledges may, perhaps, be false, because they are recommended to him by men, who, he owns, were exposed to error; and he is fettered to believe them, too, in opposition to the strongest principle of his own religion.

It is not mine to stand forward the defender of protestant principles, nor mine to direct the protestant how to act up to his principles with consistency. However, in this illustration, I have, in reality, done both—I have defended protestant principles against their violations by protestant policy, and I have shewn the protestant, that his appeals to the Divinity, both on the score of his principles, and the score of the impropriety of attesting what he owns may not be true, are inconsistent, dangerous, and indecorous things. I might add, too, that in regard of the appeal which is made to

the Divinity by the subscription of the 39 articles, were there no other objection to this solemn action but the obscurity and inaccuracies of these articles, these circumstances alone should stay the hand, or awe the tender conscience from subscribing them. Besides the truth of the thing, which we attest in all appeals to the Divinity, the sense, meaning, and import of what we attest, ought also to be tolerably understood. As it is wrong to attest what is false, so it is almost equally wrong—at least, it is disrespectful—to attest what is ambiguous. The subscriber of the 39 articles, says Doctor Prettyman, whom I have just cited, “*incurs the wrath of God, if he do not assent to them simply and unequivocally, and subscribe them in their plain and obvious sense.*” Now, the case is, the 39 articles are obscure, impenetrably obscure, even to the most penetrating understanding. The volumes, which have been written to explain them, and the infinite varieties of explanation, which these volumes present, make this only “plain and obvious,” that they have no “plain obvious sense.” The great Doctor Balguy says of them,---and a multitude of other protestant writers, make nearly the same complaint—that “*they contain ambiguities and inaccuracies, some things unphilosophical, and some things that may mislead and draw men into erroneous opinions.*”^{*} Surely, the mere circumstance of this am-

* “They who contend,” says Paley, “that nothing less can justify subscription, than the actual belief of each and

biguity, inaccuracy, and imperfection should alone withhold the mind from “ assenting simply and unequivocally” to them. But to be *obliged* to assent, “ simply and unequivocally” to them, whereas there is little in them that is simple and unequivocal—to be obliged to subscribe them “ in their plain and obvious sense,” whereas their sense is often unintelligible—and above all, to “ *incur*,” as Dr. P. asserts, “ *the wrath of God*,” for not doing it in such manner—if this be not unbecoming, let wisdom say what is!

Had I no other objections to the 39 articles, but what Doctor Balguy states, that they are *ambiguous and inaccurate*, that *they contain unphilosophical things, and things that may draw men into erroneous opinions*, these circumstances alone to my reason appear serious motives, why it is wrong in the establishment itself to propose them to the pub-

every separate proposition contained in them, must suppose, that the legislature expected the consent of 10,000 men, and that, in perpetual succession, not of one controverted proposition, but of *many hundreds*. It is difficult to conceive, how this could be expected by any who observed the incurable diversity of opinion upon all subjects, short of demonstration.”—Moral Phil.

It was owing to the multitude of and obscurity of the propositions contained in the 39 articles, that Sterne used to say: “ It is indeed possible, that all the articles may be believed; one man believing one, another believing another, and so on; but no single man was ever fool himself enough to believe them all.”

lic veneration—why it is wrong to oblige its clergy to believe them—why it is doubly wrong to oblige its clergy to teach them—and in the clergy themselves, wrong to accept such obligation. The obligation of believing and teaching the 39 articles, as it prevents all alteration in them, is repugnant to their improvement, and repugnant therefore,—as they are acknowledged to be imperfect,—to the progress of truth; and injurious, for the same reason, to the protestant community. Why forbid the improvement of what is acknowledged to be imperfect; and why forbid the improvement to the very men, who from their talents and erudition, are best calculated to make improvements?

I think this then evident, that if appeals to the Deity impose obligations---if the appeal, that I believe such and such doctrines imply the supposition and the duty, that I really do believe them, then is every protestant, who has made such appeals, whether it be under the form of an oath, or of a subscription, bound to believe the tenets, to which, under these awful circumstances, he has testified his assent. The generality of my readers, who have wisely appreciated the nature and obligation of oaths, will, I am sure, on this part of the subject conceive as I do.

And who then can reconcile the dreadful obligations of oaths and subscriptions, with the principles and liberty of the reformation? Who can

reconcile the solemn attestation of believing any code of faith with the freedom of disbelieving it—with an obligation even of disbelieving it, if the individual please, paramount to the obligation of believing it? And yet such is the case, as I have often shewn it, in the series of these illustrations, in the protestant communities. Along with their oaths and subscriptions, and the obligations of oaths and subscriptions; along with the threats of damnation, and of “incurring the wrath of God,” for not believing what these oaths and subscriptions attest—along with all these awful and binding things, they still not only tolerate, but admit the widest liberty of dissent; teach that faith is uncontrollable, and that the reason of the individual is the sole arbiter of his belief—a tribunal superior to every other. *Et sentire quæ velit, et quæ sentiat loqui* is the real religion, as Doctor Watson says, of the protestant. “*We must feel,*” says this candid man, “*the necessity of vindicating to every individual of the human race, the absolute right of worshipping God in his own way.*” “If you ask me,” says the learned protestant author of the *Discourse concerning a judge of Controversy*,—“if you ask, whose judgment ought to take place, the judgment of the church, or of every private christian? I answer, the judgment of the church, as to external government. But when the question is, what is right or wrong; true or false; in what we

may obey, and in what not—here, every private christian must judge for himself; and 'tis as much as his soul is worth to judge right,” Thus too, does Dr. Prettyman, in the words which I have cited in another place, define the nature of protestant liberty. “*It is,*” he says, “*the unalienable privilege of every christian to form his own religious opinions, and to worship God in the manner that appears to him most agreeable to the scriptures.*” But the circumstance is not even contested—if there be one principle of protestantism that is sacred; one tenet, which it is heresy to call in question, it is this, that faith is uncontrollable; and to be wise and consistent, should be the dictate of private judgment, resulting from private discussion.—Without making any further reflections, on a subject which offers so much room for reflection, I conclude, by merely saying; that if the good sense of my reader can reconcile these principles with the creeds of protestantism, and with the oaths and obligations of believing them—mine cannot.*

* That infallibility, which the reader has seen assumed and enforced by the foreign churches mentioned in this illustration, was also assumed and enforced by the church of England. I shall only notice the acts of the convocation in 1603. In them the English protestant church, in defiance of the principles on which she was founded, pronounces the sentence of excommunication against all those who shall hereafter maintain the following “wicked errors,” viz:—that the church of England

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The insecurity of the protestant.

It will not be denied, by whoever feels, though even it be feebly, for the important interests of salvation, that the cheering sensations of confidence

does not teach and maintain the doctrine of the apostles; that the form of God's worship in the church of England containeth any thing in it that is repugnant to the scriptures; that any of the nine and thirty articles are in any part superstitious or *erroneous*, or such as may not with a good conscience be subscribed unto; that the rites and ceremonies of the church of England are wicked, anti-christian, or superstitious; that the form and manner of making and consecrating bishops, &c. containeth any thing in it repugnant to the word of God. The same sentence is also pronounced against every man who shall hereafter separate himself from the communion of saints, as it is approved by the apostle's rules in the church of England, or shall affirm that such ministers as refuse to subscribe to the established manner of worship, may truly take to themselves the name of another church; or that there are within this realm any other meetings which may rightly challenge to themselves the name of true and lawful churches, &c. &c. Lastly, the "sacred synod" pronounces the same sentence against all those who shall despise its authority. See constitutions and canons ecclesiastical, in the synod begun at London, anno Domino 1603, p. 2, 3, 4, 64.

of its attainment are essential ingredients of human happiness. The mind, which without the forebodings of conscious insecurity, cannot look forward to that awful day, which is to fix its fate forever---the mind, which does not experience the rational persuasion, that the religion, which it venerates as the great principle of its future expectations, is divine---must, if wise, be uneasy. It is what indeed we every day experience, in the comparatively trifling interests of this life; the most pleasing of our sensations, under every transaction and event, is security---the most painful, incertitude. The essence of happiness is security.

However, it is not every thing that men call security, which constitutes the essence of happiness. The security which is really such, is the security of wisdom,---security, which reposing upon rational grounds, creates in the mind the pleasing sensation of unhesitating conviction. This conviction is as much the essence of wise security, as this security is the essence of happiness. The conviction, consequently, which the mind should possess of the truth of the religious system which it believes and venerates, should be the dictate of good sense, of prudence, piety, and reason; and excluding all doubts, misgivings, and uneasiness, leave it calmly assured, and confidently certain. Conviction of any other description, is but the conviction of prejudice or passion; and therefore, in

so momentous an interest as that of religion, a conviction that is both irrational and criminal.

The reason why in religion, conviction founded upon wisdom, and security founded on such conviction, are peculiarly necessary, is not only to promote happiness, and to give composure to the heart—not only to inspire an interest for duty, and an ardor in the practices of piety, but to give to faith those other qualities which the nature of faith requires. Religion is not a system of mere philosophy, the fabric of the fancy, or the suggestion of human reason—an object of conjecture, or a matter of speculation. Founded upon the divine veracity, and imparted to us by the divine authority, as the essential rule of our belief, we must believe its doctrines “without wavering,” and venerate them without hesitation. Our faith, to be pleasing to God, or beneficial to ourselves, must admit no doubt. It is not enough to imagine, that what we believe is true, we must *know* that it is true. The act of faith which alone is consonant to the nature of faith, must be able, upon wise and rational motives, to say, “*I am convinced; I am sure; and in my conviction and certitude, I adore.*” Without such conviction and certitude, neither the mind would entertain a proper esteem for the doctrines of religion, nor the heart a proper relish for the practices of piety; neither reason would pay a sufficient tribute to the divine authority, nor the understand-

ing sufficient deference to the divine veracity.— Faith would be without consolation, and devoid of merit.

I lay down then these principles---that security is essential to human happiness,---that rational conviction is essential to security, and that the conviction which faith requires, must be unwavering and steady---I lay down these principles as the dictates of wisdom; and by the light of them, I proceed to discuss and analyze the nature of protestant security, of protestant conviction, and of protestant faith. The thing, indeed, is hardly an object either of discussion, or analysis. What is then the basis of protestant security, the foundation of protestant confidence---and to unite all in one sentence---the motive of protestant faith?--- I answer the threefold interrogation by one word--- *Private opinion---the bold conjecture, or the peculiar inclination of each solitary individual.* Et sentire quæ velit, et quæ sentiat loqui, is the religion, says Dr. W. whom I cite so often, of the protestant. The protestant is secure, is convinced, and believes, because his *own reason* has decided that the system which he adores is divine. Indeed, any other authority in religion, beyond that of private opinion, is, in fact, downright popery. Now who, when he considers the weakness of human reason---how easily it is warped by prejudice, and misled by passion,---who can rationally suppose, that the opinion formed

under the suggestion of its dictates, can possibly constitute the basis of wise security, the foundation of wise conviction, and above all, the grounds and motive of sanctifying faith? There is a pride or rashness in such supposition, sufficient at the first blush to evince its folly.

But let us now conceive a man to have formed his religion, according to the principles of protestantism, and to have formed it, according to the best methods which protestantism requires. Let us conceive him to have read, studied, reflected, and compared;---to have interrogated his bible, his reason, his senses, and his imagination; and to have adopted the results and combinations of all this discussion and comparison, for the code of his belief. All this is strictly protestant, it is acting precisely as the protestant, by his maxims, is bound to act; and it is too, so necessary, that whatever protestant does not act thus, is not a protestant according to the maxims of his religion. Well; and suppose all this more than herculean labour finished; behold the patient man, who has drudged thus arduously through it, sits down possessed of a code of faith the genuine offspring of protestant principles. I will not pretend to calculate---(that is quite impossible)---what it may contain. As the rule which he has followed allows, and even bids, every individual---be his capacity, his judgment, his passions, his prejudices

and feelings what they may---bids him form his own belief, it will, of course, be a creed analogous to the nature and temperament of his character----different, it is natural to suppose, from the creeds of Luther, Calvin, or the 39 articles. It will be a peculiar creed---a creed by itself. However, this is not the point. The creed thus formed, was formed as it should be, according to the maxims of the reformation; and therefore, according to the same maxims, it should also be venerated and believed.--Now, reason, I appeal to thy tribunal. Is it possible, that the man who has formed it, can seriously conceive it to be true---can calmly repose secure that it is divine---can confidently trust his salvation to its dictates? Can he reasonably, and without apprehension, say---and he must be able to say it to make an act of faith, *“the whole church has erred, but I have not. The wisdom, the learning, and the piety of its pastors, and even the wisdom, learning, and piety of every other establishment, have been deceived, but I am not. The creed which I have composed is not only probable (a probable creed is not a foundation of faith) it is true; it is certainly true; I cannot be mistaken, although all around me are deceived.”* Why, the very statement of such conduct is the proof of its presumption; and the proof of its presumption is the refutation of the system which suggests it.--And, yet, the whole process which I have described,

with its deductions and conclusions, is the dictate and result of the system of protestantism.

I have supposed, also, in the above description, that the man who thus formed his creed, formed it, as he imagined, upon the texts and authority of his bible.---In answer to this flattering and illusive argument, which is for ever---and indeed consistently so---in the mouths of protestants, let me suggest the few following very plain remarks:---that the bible is in many places extremely difficult and obscure---that it is made the pretended basis, from the circumstances of its difficulty and obscurity, of every heresy and error, which have disgraced the religion of Jesus Christ---and that it admits from the same causes, a variety of interpretations. From these obvious reasons, it follows, I think pretty evidently, that the man who has formed his code of faith, even upon the authority of his bible---which is all that the wisdom of protestantism requires---cannot in his own mind be rationally convinced, or in his heart peacefully secure, that his own interpretation of the sacred volume is alone the dictate of revelation. Faith, or religion, consists not in the words of the bible, but in the interpretation of the words---not in the dead letter, but in the sense, which the understanding affixes to the letter.* Therefore, since the interpretation and

* Saint Jerome remarks, that if men were to interpret the sacred scriptures, *literally*, nothing would be so easy as to

the sense, which our reasoner affixes to the words, or to the letter, are different from those, not only of the whole body of the church, but from those too, of all the sects and sectarists that surround him, it follows, either, that to feel himself secure he should feel himself infallible, or that seeing his opinion at variance with every other, he should conceive it presumptuous to believe it exclusively divine. His opinion, unless he be infallible, can at best, appear but probable; and he can only feel secure, because he chooses foolishly to think that he is so.—This, at all events, is certain, that reasoning, as himself would reason upon every other subject, save that of religion—in the cases of health, or worldly interest—not only would he, where his solitary opinion is opposed to the opinion of many others, and of others, above all, more learned and prudent than himself, not only would he be diffident and distrustful,—not only consider the want of distrust and diffidence the effect of pride,—he would without hesitation, give up the suggestions of his private judgment to adopt the dictate of the general sentiment. But, the fact is, what is deemed wise in every worldly transaction, is condemned as foolish in religion.

form erroneous dogmas from them. One might easily prove from them, for example, he adds, that no one should be admitted into the church, who has *shoes and two coats*!—
Dial. adv. Luc.

I do not wish to cast aught like ridicule upon the false security of the protestant:—as it is both the effect and the cause of prejudice and error, I weep sincerely at it. Having, therefore, shewn, that he cannot rationally conceive, that the creed is divine, which he had formed by the rules of his principles, I will shew also, that not even is *he* certain of the divinity of those objects, which really are divine, and, which he reveres, as the guides and foundations of his faith.—The protestant believes the scriptures to be divine—the full and infallible depositum of truth. He admits also—at least the English protestant admits,—the decisions of the four first councils, as the dictates of the Holy Ghost. That he believes all this, is a circumstance at which I rejoice,—a circumstance which is fortunate for religion, for society, and for himself. And yet, I contend—and I contend upon the plea of protestant principles—that fortunate as is his belief, yet it has no better basis to repose on, than that which I have already described, as too feeble to support the strong fabric of wise confidence and calm security.—He believes, that the scriptures are divine—the full and infallible depositum of religious truth; and that the decisions of the four first councils are the dictates of the Holy Ghost.—As for the scriptures, in the first place, let me ask him, by what authority he is assured they are divine, and the full and infallible

depositum of religious truth? As he admits no infallible authority to interpret the sacred volumes, so he admits no infallible authority to recommend them. The admission of such authority, is repugnant to every maxim of protestantism; being the admission of the catholic rule of faith and of tradition, and equivalently, therefore, the admission of the truth of catholicity. By what methods then can he be assured of the divinity and infallibility of the sacred scriptures? Does he know which books are canonical, which are not? He must know this to be assured of either.*—Does he know that the versions which he reads are accurate and conformable to the sense of the originals from which they are translated—or, if he read the originals themselves, does he know that they are authentic—know that the text to which he affixes such interpretation, is genuine and uncorrupted?† He should

* Luther denied the canonicity of the three first gospels, asserting, that St. John's is the only true one.

The first English translators of the bible denied that the epistle to the Hebrews was written by St. Paul. They struck his name out of the title.—See the bibles of 1579 and 1580.

The protestants make no difficulty of maintaining, that there is no authentic edition of the bible. They say this, in the preface of the Figurine edition, and elsewhere. They own, that the Hebrew and Greek texts are both, in many places, vitiated.

† As for the protestant translations of the bible, behold what the protestants themselves have remarked respecting

know all this to be assured of the divinity of the sacred scriptures: His knowledge upon these im-
 them. Zuinglius thus reproaches Luther with the infidelity of that great apostle's version. "*Thou corruptest, O, Luther, the divine word. Thou art an open and bold perverter of the sacred scriptures. Although hitherto we have esteemed thee beyond measure, yet now we blush at thy profaneness,*"—Zuing. ad Luth. Tom. Lib. de S. Such also is the opinion of many other protestants respecting this heresiarch's translation.—In like manner,—by way of retaliation, it is true; but the retaliation has truth for its apology—does Luther censure the translation of the sacred books by Zuinglius and his fellow teachers. So gross is the infidelity of this translation, that Luther calls Zuinglius and his coadjutors, "*asses, fools, anti-christs, impostors, &c. &c.*"—The edition, which was given by Œcolampadius and the divines of Basil, is severely reprobated by Beza. He calls it "*wicked and quite repugnant to the dictates of the Holy Ghost!*" So, also, does he condemn the translation by Castalio. "*It is,*" he says, "*sacrilegious, wicked, and pagan.*"—As for Calvin's translation, the learned Molinæus says of it, or rather of the translator; "*He makes the text of the gospel leap up and down; he uses violence to the letter of the gospel, and adds to the text.*" He says the same also of Beza's translation—the translation which the English were wont to follow—Beza he says, "*entirely changes the text.*" "*Indeed,*" says Castalio, "*to mention all Beza's corruptions of the scripture, would fill a volume.*" so that there is not one of the ancient protestant translations of the bible, which a host of protestants do not reprobate. I have mentioned, already, Luther's translation, but let me just add what Stapilus and Emserus remark of his Dutch translation of the *New Testament only*, that they traced in it "*a thousand four hundred corruptions!*"

In regard of our English versions, it would be easy to

portant subjects, should be various and extensive. Episcopius says, he should be acquainted with the Greek and Hebrew languages! Whitaker says, that without the knowledge of these languages he must necessarily err*! However, I think, the protestant will allow it—since these are not the usual methods by which protestants convince themselves of the divinity of the scriptures, nor the methods by which the occupied and the ignorant *could* convince themselves of their divinity, it is not upon these, that their security and confidence of their divinity repose, Is it then from the general context, that the protestant is assured of their divinity? But this

cite a multitude of learned protestants, who condemn them even with indignation. In the address of the divines of Lincoln to James the First, among other things, they say—

“Our translation is absurd and senseless, perverting in many places the meaning of the Holy Ghost.” “*How shall I,*” remarks Mr. Burgess, alluding to the necessity of subscribing to its canonicity, “*approve under my hand a translation which has so many omissions, and many additions; which sometimes obscures, sometimes perverts the sense, being sometimes senseless, sometimes contrary.*” (Apol.) But what Broughton says, in his letter to the lords of the council, and in his address to the bishops, is stronger still. “*The public translation of the scriptures into English,*” he tells them, “*is such that it perverts the text of the Old Testament in 848 places; and that it causes millions of millions to reject the New Testament.*” King James used to say, that he could never see a bible well translated into English.—See preface to Ward’s errata.

* Necessario hallucinantur. Lib. de Sac. scrip.

is a mere *petitio principii*,---begging the question, and pretending to prove the divinity of some books, by the same rule, by which others pretend to demonstrate the uncanonicity of other books.---Is it from the sensations, which the beauty and sublimity of the sacred writings excite in the minds and hearts of those, who hear, or read them? Mere artifice, originally, of the first reformers; and subsequently, the suggestion of enthusiasm and ignorance.*---

* A protestant family (the anecdote is in Beurrier) was one day reading among themselves a book of piety. A neighbour—a protestant also—chanced to enter during the pious lecture, and seating herself with them, attending seriously to it. Having heard a few pages, she exclaimed, good God, how beautiful, how easy it is to distinguish, that it is the spirit of God which speaks. The spirit of God, said one of the family! Why don't you reflect? What, answered the lady, is not that the scripture? No, it was replied, it is a history. Ah, then I am mistaken; I had imagined that it was the scripture.—The company, in general, made no further observation upon the circumstance. But an individual who was present, made a very natural one. Here, he said, is a person who has taken a common history for the scripture; of course, the private spirit cannot distinguish what is scripture and what is not; therefore do our ministers deceive us, when they tell us that our private spirit cannot deceive us in making the distinction between truth and error. But, if they deceive us here, they may deceive us likewise on other subjects; therefore, may our religion be not the true one. I will get myself instructed. He did so and abjured his errors.

If the sensations which some men experience in reading the holy volume, be the attestations of its divinity, then are they also the attestations of every heresy, which every fanatic has introduced.—Is it, because the scriptures themselves declare that they are divine? “*But,*” says Chillingworth, “*no wise man will assert, that the divinity of a writing can be known by itself alone;*” or as Hooker remarks, “*it is confessedly impossible for the scripture itself to teach what books of the scripture we are to esteem holy.*” As well might the Mussulman conclude, that the Coran is divine, because it assures him that it is so. Indeed to conclude with a reflection created by the mention of the Coran— if the various motives and arguments were seriously compared together, by which the protestant is induced to believe the divinity of the scriptures; and those by which the Mussulman is induced to venerate the supposed divinity of the Coran, there would hardly be found one motive or argument adduced by the former to prove the divinity of the bible, which might not, or is not, adduced by the latter to prove the divinity of the Coran. The Mussulman appeals equally, as does the protestant, to the context, to the beauty and sublimity of his Coran, to his feelings, and to the assurances which the holy volume frequently repeats, that it is infallible and divine. In short, setting aside, as the protestant does, the tradition

and authority of the church, which has transmitted to him the sacred scriptures, and recommends them as divine—setting these aside, he has no other assurance of their divinity, than what rests upon the basis of a fortunate prepossession, or the platform of an equally fortunate prejudice.

I have remarked, also, that the protestants, at least of this country, revere the four first councils, and admit their decisions as the dictates of the Holy Ghost. As a catholic, I also, of course, bear the same veneration for these holy assemblies, and their decisions. But, I again contend, as I have done in regard of the sacred scriptures, that the protestant, *by the maxims of protestantism*, has neither sufficient proofs to establish the unerring certitude of these decisions, nor sufficient motives to stay the apprehension, that his confidence of their certitude is not ill-founded and precipitate. Indeed, if it be true, that the protestant, by his principles, has no absolute certitude of the divinity of the scriptures, it will easily be admitted, that he cannot possess such certitude respecting the truth of the decisions of the four first general councils. But, to ascertain this, by the tenor of protestant principles—The protestant, by his principles, cannot, to be consistent, believe that these decisions are undoubtedly true, and should be venerated as divine, till he has, by the industry of investigation, ascertained what, in the first place, these decisions

are; and how exactly, in the next place, they accord with the texts and doctrines of the sacred scriptures. The members of the assemblies, which issued the decisions, though convened in council, are in his eyes fallible man—fallible, as himself,—and the church, at the periods when they met together, had, according to the testimony of protestant writers, fallen into various and important errors. Thus, according to the centuriators, the faithful believed in purgatory as early as the year 138; prayed for the dead as soon as the year 200; and long before the epoch, when the last of these venerable assemblies was convened, worshipped images and relics, used confession, professed celibacy, &c. &c. All these and many similar institutions were general, at these periods. Now if, at periods so early, there existed institutions, which the protestant reprobates as errors,—if they were approved, or only tolerated—or rather, as was the case, if they were common and universal—how can he be assured and wisely secure, that the pastors of the church, in the four first councils, did not err in their decisions. These pastors were the men who had approved and promoted the very objects which the protestant condemns as errors; and therefore, just as in his supposition, they were deceived in these respects, why, also, may they

not have been deceived in the decisions of these councils?*

In these councils, the respectable prelates who composed them, condemned the four great heresies of Arius, Macedonius, Nestorius, and Eutyches. Now, the authors of these heresies, and many of their proselytes, were men distinguished for their

* The circumstance is so notoriously evident, that the fathers and early pastors of the church believed, as the catholic church believes at present, that the reformers and a multitude of later protestants have treated them with the same contempt and opprobrious abuse, which is daily so copiously teemed on popery. I shall here pass over the abuse, and give the calmer testimony of a few distinguished protestants, respecting the opinions and authority of the early fathers of the church.

Melancthon says of them: *"The ancient fathers, immediately from the beginning of the church, obscured the doctrine of the justice of faith; they multiplied ceremonies, and devised new modes of worship.—(On i. Cor. 3.)"*

Peter Martyr says; *"The errors of the church began immediately after the time of the apostles; and therefore, as long as we urge the authority of councils and fathers, so long we shall remain in the same errors."*—p. 1. 477. p. 490.

Beza says: *"I have said more than once, that comparing the ancient times of the church, even those immediately after the apostles, with ours, they had less knowledge, but better consciences."*

"Indeed," says Warburton, "what constitutes a protestant of fashion is a contempt of the fathers." Hence, the numerous works to shew that their testimony and authority are of no force in points of faith.

learning and moral virtues. They were, many of them, mortified, chaste, meek, and charitable.— They were versed likewise in the holy scriptures; and tracing in them, as they imagined, just as the protestants do at present, the truth of their peculiar doctrines, they defended them also, as the protestants do, by the authority of the sacred text, and defended them often by arguments the most speciously conclusive. Their method of proof and defence was almost entirely protestant. Therefore, again, if it be supposed, that the pastors of the church had erred before the eras of these heresies, why may they not have erred in condemning these heresiarchs? Doubtless, the men who, it is asserted, had erred in so many important points, might have erred equally in their decisions, when convened in councils. At least, the protestant, who without examination and discussion, blindly adopts their decisions, neither acts up to his own principles, nor by his principles, has any rational certitude, that their decisions were correct.”*

* By his principles, a protestant should not certainly believe aught, nor hardly disbelieve aught, which he has not previously discussed. Thus, not only should he be cautious in receiving the decisions of the church, which condemned the four great heresies, and know well the doctrines of those heresies, he should, in reality, be cautious also how he admits her decisions in condemning the various other heresies, which she equally condemned within the interval of the four first centuries; and know equally the doctrines of these various

Thus, I think it manifest, that the security of the protestant, even when it is most secure, is founded on the visionary basis of presumption, and is repugnant to the general tenor of his principles. I might here, did not the circumstance appear invidious, or the triumph of vain complacency—I might here contrast it with the wise security and the tranquil confidence which the catholic enjoys under the broad shade of the catholic church, reposing upon the broad and solid basis of catholic principles. Admitting an authority for his guide, which he is assured cannot mislead him—an authority infallible and divine—he only listens to it, and believes; hears its mandate, and obeys. No diffidence attends his submission; no trembling discussions perplex and tease his reason; no doubts alarm his faith. Or—even abstracting from this pleasing principle of his security—if the catholic view only the human motives of credibility, which give a sanction to rational confidence, what a luminous and flattering combination of circumstances does he contemplate, and how well calculated, *heresies*. For, if she had erred already, why may she not have erred in condemning them: and if the doctrines of these heresies, as their authors all pretended, were founded on the texts and authority of the bible, why may not the truth possibly lie concealed in some of them? Now, St. Epiphanius says, that there had existed, or did exist, within this interval, eighty different heresies—St. Austin counts up ninety—and Philastrius a hundred and eighteen!

when compared to the few feeble motives of confidence which the protestant affects to boast—how well calculated to animate security, and to take away from timidity itself the misgivings of apprehension! The catholic, even here, appears calmly seated upon a rock, while the protestant seems leaning scarcely upon a reed.—Possessing, from his private interpretation of the sacred scriptures, the same motives and authority for believing his religion to be divine, which the protestant produces as the sole principle of his faith and security, the catholic adds to these the soothing conviction, that his belief is that of every other catholic throughout the universe, and of every age, since the period when christianity began to dawn. He sees that his religion has been the religion of the learned and wise, of the great and good of every nation, of every place, and of every generation—of the sages and the saints, of the illustrious heroes and distinguished characters, which, through the long vista of fifteen centuries (to count only to the pretended reformation) have adorned the christian world. When he compares the multitudes that have believed, and that still believe, as he does, with the numbers of the protestant establishment, he finds that it is comparing nations to a few individuals, and contrasting the authority of the illustrious men of eighteen ages, to the upstart intrusions of a few obscure innovators, the date of

whose origin is only yesterday. Rather, it is comparing the authority of nations and generations, the testimony of innumerable writers, and venerable councils, to the solitary opinion—for this alone is genuine protestantism—of a solitary individual! I will here only just remark, that if even it were true, that the protestant were secure, it is equally true, that under such awkward circumstances, he should be modest in his security—not, as he does incessantly, reproaching the catholic with folly and stupidity for his belief. I will not do it,—but might not the catholic, if petulantly disposed to reverberate reproach,—might he not, after viewing his own and the protestant's relative motives of security, compare the latter, for thinking himself alone secure, to the madman, who called every body a fool and a madman but himself!

Hitherto, in this illustration, I have considered and admitted what, by the principles of protestantism, forms the best, and should be sole basis of protestant security in religion. But, if it were to be considered on what, in reality, his security reposes, it would be discovered, that feeble as is his best basis, and that on which alone it should repose,—that on which, in reality, it does repose, is more feeble still. Let who may undertake to analyze the motives on which the belief and security of the protestant are grounded, he will discover, that they are grounded, not upon the principles of

protestantism,—nor upon the knowledge of protestantism,—not upon the comparison, which he has made between his own religion, and the institutions which differ from it; nor, consequently, upon the wise conviction that his own religion is divine, and other institutions human—this would be the wisdom of protestantism;—he will discover, that, with very few exceptions, the protestant believes and is secure, because accident has placed him in the society of protestants;—secure, because he is born of protestant parents, and has been baptized by a protestant minister—secure, because he is ignorant, and too indolent to instruct his ignorance—secure, because he listens to the voice of prejudice and misrepresentation, and shuts his ears to the language of wisdom and impartiality—secure, because interest, often, and passion and fanaticism, and bigotry have more power over his reason, than truth, piety, and moderation. In short, he will discover, that few, very few, protestants have any other motives for their security, but the accidents of birth, the influences of education, the partialities created by example, and those more pernicious partialities, which prejudice, self-love, and selfishness excite. Lulled by these, or some of these, into the feeble hope, that his religion may be divine, he lives

in it without rational conviction, and dies in it without wise security.*

* The celebrated Molines, to whom the protestants, on account of his eloquence, gave the name of the protestant Flechier, asked, one day, a catholic priest, whether among the dying whom he assisted, there were ever any who entertained doubts or uneasiness respecting the truth of their religion? No, answered the priest, they regret only that they have not always lived up to its injunctions. As for the religion itself, I never met with any who had the smallest doubt about it. Well, replied Molines, I have not found that such is the case among us. Among the dying, many have often asked me, Sir, are we right in our religion? Yes, yes, I said always to them, be easy, and undisturbed on that point. But, alas! Sir, he added, I gave, or endeavoured to give them a conviction, in those trying moments, which I did not feel myself. Molines became afterwards a catholic. The circumstance of feeling a want of conviction, like Molines, is I am convinced, not uncommon among the well instructed members of the protestant church. Would, that like him too, they would labour to remove it!

It was the opinion of Dr. Johnson, that the conversion of a catholic to the protestant religion could not be sincere and lasting, while he thought, equally, that the conversion of a protestant to the catholic religion would have both the qualities of sincerity and durability. This opinion is mentioned by Boswell, with his own glossary upon it. Sir William Scott says Boswell, informs me, that he heard Johnson say, "A man who is converted from Protestantism to popery may be sincere, he parts with nothing, he is only super-adding to what he had already. But, a convert from popery to protestantism gives up so much of what he has held as sacred as any thing that he retains; there is so much *laceration* of mind in such a conversion, that it can hardly be sincere and lasting."—"The

It is a circumstance astonishing, almost, as it is alarming, that in contradiction to every principle of his religion, and in opposition to the dictate of his spiritual good, the protestant should refuse to reason upon the subject of his security. The circumstance too, is peculiarly wonderful in a multitude of protestants, who reason, and reason wisely, upon almost every other object; who, upon every other object which interests their happiness, or presents the chance of danger, are restless and uneasy, till they have attained the rational confidence of security. It is only upon the great interest of religion, that we may observe the learned, the wise, the enlightened, the prudent, and even the timid, supinely easy and stupidly secure :—proof, I will not say, of this awful truth, that men are often wiser in the transactions which relate to this life, than in those which regard the next; but proof, certainly, of this humiliating truth, that prejudices will grow every where, and that the greatest and best minds are frequently the dupes and victims of illusion.

Doubtlessly, if the protestant will not reason, there is nothing more natural than his false security—nothing more obvious, than the respect which he may, perhaps, entertain for his own religion, nor

truth of this observation," adds Boswell, "may be confirmed by many and eminent instances, some of which will occur to most of my readers."

more intelligible than the disrespect which he certainly entertains for ours. Let a man hear only the commendation of protestantism—and this is the case with the protestant—of course, he will esteem protestantism only—Let him hear nothing but the misrepresentation and abuse of catholicity—and this too, is the case—of course, he will be ignorant of catholicity, and disesteem it. It is, indeed, true, that considering the present habits of society, and viewing the situation in which the protestant is placed, it is easy, extremely easy—although indeed the thing is both improper and repugnant to his principles—to account for his *belief* of his own religion, and for his *disbelief* of ours, and consequently, to account, also, for the illusive confidence of his security.

I conceive, easily, that when once an institution has been formed—after it has, for a certain space of time, subsisted in peace, and been organized to order—after it has been strengthened by the writings, and recommended by the virtues of many distinguished characters—I conceive it natural enough, much too natural for the men who have been born in it, above all the indolent, and the ignorant, who seldom dream of looking beyond the precincts of any situation in which they are placed, to sit down easy, and contented in its society. But if, too, to an institution thus formed, organized, and recommended, you add these other pleasing re-

commendations, that its doctrines and practices impose no painful restraints on self-love and the passions—that it is endowed with wealth, honours, and worldly comforts—that it possesses a priesthood, which led, perhaps, by interest to adopt its tenets, finds it also its interest to propagate them—where is the cause for wonder, that formed as men are, and circumstanced as are the members of such institution; above all, if they neither reason, neither interrogate the motives of their security, nor listen to the doctrines of any other religion—where is the wonder, that they profess its tenets without hesitation, and live in its community without distrust?—The above is the description of the state of protestantism, and of the situation of the protestant.—Why, who will deny, that be what may the errors of such institution, the effect would be the same—its members would live securely in it?

It is to an equally obvious cause, that curiosity or wisdom may trace the confident security, which the protestant entertains in his *disbelief* of popery. There is, really, nothing more natural, than the unhappy prejudices which the unreasoning protestant cherishes in regard of our religion; nor, consequently, since prejudice is the nurse of false conviction, any thing more natural, than the false security which he entertains in its disbelief. I will dwell a moment on the subject of these prejudices.

The prejudices of the protestant in regard of our holy religion—curiosity will find, if it trace their origin and their causes—instilled with his milk, grow with his growth, and ripen with his maturity.—Before the infant reason of the babe is capable of any thing like discussion, before he can lisp, or understand the language of wisdom, while cradled yet in the nursery, his nurse, or his mamma, with timid and prudent piety, describe our religion to him as the most frightful thing in nature—bloody, cruel, wicked, idolatrous, &c. &c.—The child has neither yet the comprehension to suspect the truth, nor the means to detect the falsehood of these assertions. He is, as yet, unable to distinguish truth from error. The consequence is, that as he naturally loves his parents, or his nurse, and naturally believes them, he also naturally believes the tales which they relate to him respecting popery. From the nursery, the child is ushered into the school. There he has a master, who confirms what the nurse and mamma had taught him. He hears repeated, and perhaps improved, the same dreadful accounts of our religion. The gravity, and supposed wisdom of the teacher give authority to his words, and strengthen the impressions of the nursery. Of course, his aversions for popery is increased;

From the school the boy advances, perhaps, to the university, and there, though little is said or taught about religion, he hears and learns enough to confirm the prejudices of the child: at least, he hears and learns nothing to remove them.—From the university he enters on the broad walks of society; there he hears the angry invectives, the false representations of his parson, the renewed ridicule of his parents, and the satires of his friends; there he hears, perhaps, the pious Doctor Shute solemnly proclaim that “popery is idolatry;” the eloquent Doctor Rennel energetically declare, that “it is an absurd and cruel superstition;” the orthodox Doctor Tomline seriously teach, that it is “a system of artifice and impiety,”—hearing, incessantly, men of this description, the grave, the learned, the virtuous, and even the temperate often, and the wise men,—whom he does not suspect of being ignorant of our religion, and whom he is less disposed to suspect of being so unjust, as wilfully to misrepresent it—hearing them assert such horrid things respecting it—the consequence is obvious, that, as he is probably too indolent to consult, and already too partial to conceive consultation necessary—as he is lulled to tranquillity by the tranquillity of those around him, he believes all the assertions, and reposes, as confidently convinced of the falsehood of catholicity, as he is of the errors of Mahometanism, or of the folly of pa-

ganism itself.—Thus is the false security of the protestant natural; but natural, only because he will not reason, and wisely interrogate its motives. It is the natural security of ignorance fed by bigotry; the natural security of prejudice supported by fanaticism; the natural security of indolence cherished by invective, misrepresentation, and example—I exhort the protestant, be what may the measure of his confidence, and the calmness of his security, to distrust their wisdom, and discuss their causes. Although natural, they are inexcusable, if they do not rest upon the basis of truth. Should he discuss them seriously, and according to the methods which reason and religion recommend, he will discover, without any very arduous research, that what had hitherto formed their platform, was but the baseless fabric of the fancy, and the work of prejudice. He will discover the truth of that awful saying of the apostle, that “*there is a way, which seemeth right, but whose end conducteth to death.*”

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On liberty of belief, &c.

I have, in the series of these illustrations, so often explained the nature of the liberty, which the

protestant claims in the investigation of religion, and so often pointed out the mischiefs, which it has produced, and which it is calculated to produce, that it should appear superfluous to make it any more the subject of discussion. I do, indeed, as I dislike repetition, resume the discussion with reluctance. Only its very superior importance, and the wish to unite the scattered observations which I have made---and, if I can, of strengthening those observations---have induced me to do it.

Lest, however, in reprobating *liberty of conscience*, I should seem an enemy to liberty itself, or to liberality wisely understood, let me premise this remark, that I mean not to reprobate any form, exertion, or extent of mental and religious liberty, which are not incompatible with the ordinances of God the nature of the christian dispensation---I premise this remark, that, if I inculcate the necessity of restraints and the wisdom of stays and barriers, the restraints and barriers, whose necessity and wisdom I inculcate, are neither those of persecution, nor those of civil intolerance. Loving liberty, as much as does the protestant, while it is regulated by the laws of wisdom, and while it acts in its proper sphere; and abhorring, equally as he does, the horrors of persecution, I approve no restraints in religion but those, which piety has created under the influences of charity--exhortation, instruction, knowledge---no barriers, but those,

which the hand of Divinity has placed in the paths of the sacred fold.

Having made these observations, in order to screen myself from the imputation of illiberality, I will, also, before I proceed to contest the propriety of the protestant liberty of belief,---just recal the definition and nature of it, to the recollection of the reader.

The liberty which the reformation gave to its adherents, and which protestantism still gives to its members, is the liberty to investigate, and by the suggestion of reason decide, what in the great code of revelation, or in the various systems of general belief, is true, what false, what wise, what foolish. Secure, as he supposes, under the direction of the apostle who bids him "*prove all things,*" the protestant erects his reason into a supreme tribunal, and his judgment he makes the standard, by which he "proves" or measures the divine objects which he discusses. The result of this process is what constitutes his religion. So that, as Dr. Watson elegantly expresses it, the religion of a protestant consists "in believing and confessing what he pleases—*et sentire quæ velit, et quæ sentiat loqui.*"

However desirable the circumstance might be, in some instances, for the peace and permanency of the protestant institutions, yet have they not the power, with any thing like decency or consistency, to contest or deny to any individual the privilege of

this liberty. Whoever contests or denies it, must accuse the first reformers of rebellion, and set aside the only fundamental maxim and the most distinguishing feature of the protestant religion. Whoever denies it, is obliged, if consistency be an obligation, to re-acknowledge the authority, and return to the pale of the catholic church; because, between the most perfect liberty of conscience, and the acknowledgment of her authority, there exists no medium. The reason of all this is evident, not only in the conduct and language of the apostles of the reformation, who discarded all authority as tyranny, and the violation of the liberty of the gospel, but in the acknowledged tenets of all the various sects of protestantism. Among these sects, there is not one which does not reject the infallibility of all human tribunals; and considers all institutions and assemblages of men, whatever be their multitude or talents, like individuals, subject to error. The consequence is, therefore, obvious---that, since the opinions of men, who may err, and of course, perhaps, do err, cannot form the basis of divine faith, nor give to belief the firm conviction which faith requires---therefore are the conscience and reason of each individual his guides; and God is the sole tribunal and judge, to whose authority he is amenable.

The above is an accurate delineation of the real maxims of protestant liberty, on whose groundless-

ness, impropriety, inconsistency, and danger, I will proceed to present a few reflections to the good sense and piety of the protestant reader.

Consulting, then, in the first place, the sacred scriptures, respecting the liberty of opinion, which our great legislator appears to sanction in his followers, I find there, no other liberty, but that of believing, precisely and distinctly, what his wisdom had imparted to mankind. "*He that receiveth not my words,*" he says (John xii. 48.) "*hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day.*" *He that believeth not, shall* (as the protestant versions translate the passage) *be damned.* Mark xvi. 16.) Accordingly, St. Paul adds, "*though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel than that which we have preached, let him be accursed.*" (Gal. i. 8.) Nothing, certainly, can be more forcibly expressive than the above texts, and several others of the same import, of the necessity of faith, and of the necessity of that faith which believes *that*, and *that only*, which Christ Jesus has revealed. There is not in the sacred volumes, a solitary text, which sanctions either the privilege of disbelieving with impunity, any of the doctrines of revelation, or of believing them as the private judgment, or fancy of the individual, might deem them wise, rational, or credible.

Consulting, in like manner, the opinions of the holy fathers, and early writers of the church, respecting this boasted liberty, I find, that neither the thing, nor even the name of *liberty of conscience* was known among them. Not in their voluminous and various writings; not in the decrees of councils; not in the canons of synods; not in the regulations of churches, will there be found aught that authorizes so strange a privilege. On the contrary, whoever consults all, or any of these important mediums of information, will discover, that so far from sanctioning it, they all, in imitation of the apostle, declare "accursed" whoever believes not all the doctrines of the church. They all consider the obligation of entire, undoubting and humble faith, as an essential appendage of religion; and they hang the neglect of it round with threats, anathemas and excommunications. Such even, at the purest and most enlightened periods, was the conviction of the church of the necessity of admitting and believing all her doctrines, that in cases which were comparatively of minor consequence, she excommunicated whoever refused acquiescence in her decisions. She acted thus, in the regulation of the time for the celebration of Easter; anathematizing those who did not celebrate it on the proper day, although they believed sincerely, that the day on which they celebrated it was the right one, and celebrated it too, like the members of the church,

with the greatest fervor and devotion. The case was, in points of faith, and in the objects of religion, the church wisely considered even little things as great; and looked upon every thing as essential, that was established and ordained by the injunctions of her authority. Liberty of conscience, most certainly, she granted not. Offspring of pride and parent of insubordination, she ranked it, under the appellations of disbelief or disobedience, among those sins which exclude from eternal happiness.

In reality, considering the nature of the christian dispensation, its end and aim, its value and importance, it is obvious, that under all and each of these considerations, it is too vitally and momentously serious to be left to the discretionary judgment and choice of the human fancy. For, what is the nature of the christian dispensation? It is the will of God imparted to his creatures, marking out to them the precise method in which he chooses to be worshipped; containing the laws which he orders them to observe, and the doctrines which he commands them to believe. What are its end and aim? The attainment and security of salvation. What its value and importance? Of course, infinitely great, since the attainment and security of salvation are dependent on its cultivation: they are such, that even a God, divesting himself of his greatness, came down from the seats of glory, and clothed himself

in the littleness of man, that he might communicate them to us: such, that he shed his blood to render them dear to our feelings, and interesting to our understandings. Now, considering the christian dispensation, merely as the law appointed by our great legislator for his subjects to observe; or, as the way marked out, by which he chooses to be honoured, it follows, doubtlessly, that it is their bounden duty and obligation to revere it,—to observe the practices which it ordains, and to believe the tenets which it communicates. It is for these reasons, that the sacred scriptures express, so forcibly, the obligation of belief—for these reasons, that the church always considered every form of religious error so criminal—for these reasons, that at every period, since the establishment of christianity, so many heroes have shed their blood rather than deny any article of their creed. Certain it is, there is nothing in the nature or institution of revelation that can seem to sanction, I do not say any deliberate dissent from its provisions and injunctions, but even the liberty of interpreting its provisions and injunctions in any other sense than that which their divine author appended to them. It is here, that that saying of his is verified, *he that is not with me, is against me.*---Mat. xii. 30.

Hence, are those trite, though triumphantly urged vindications of error groundless---“ that provided a man be *convinced in his conscience* of his

opinions, and be *sincere* in the profession of them, he is, therefore, justified for believing and professing them." This is nearly the same thing as to say, that all is *right*, which a man believes *right*; the same thing as to say, that the violation of what God commands and the disbelief of what he has revealed, are often more obligatory, than the observance of his law, and the belief of his sacred doctrines. It is, at all events, erecting a very fallacious interpreter of *right* and *truth*, and a very general approver of *wrong* and *error*, into a rule and standard of religion. I will, *en passant*, remark upon the import of these interesting words, *conscience* and *sincerity*, that nothing is so little understood as they are, nothing so much abused. That *conscience* is a guide of right and truth, and *sincerity* a principle of virtue, are propositions, which properly understood, are perfectly correct. They are so, where the will and the law of God are the basis. They are not so, where they lean upon what is wrong or false. The case then is this, that although indeed it is always sinful to act against the dictates of conscience and sincerity, because in such event, the man who does it, condemns himself; yet are there various forms and descriptions of conscience and sincerity, which, as they rest either upon right and truth, or upon wrong and error, give to the actions and belief, which result from them, either the stamp of virtue, or

the stigma of criminality. There is the upright and enlightened conscience, the wise and well-founded sincerity; and there is the false and unenlightened conscience, and the unwise and ill-founded sincerity. The former is the guide of virtue, the beam of truth, and the source of merit: the latter, the monitor of vice, the friend of falsehood, and the source of reprobation. To the latter, applies that dreadful sentence—“*there is a way, which seemeth right to man, but whose end conducteth to death.*”—Hence, are conscience and sincerity mere *relative* and *compound* things; wise only, justifiable and right, as they accord with the will of God, and are regulated by the dictates of truth. Without these maxims, there is no crime so dark in the annals of vice; no error so gross in the history of folly, that might not be justified on the plea of conscience, and the score of sincerity. The persecutor and the martyr, the sage and the fanatic, the man who adores revelation, and the monster that derides it, without this maxim, might be ranked in the same situation: for, it will not be denied, that under the influences of conscience and the guidance of sincerity, there have been perpetrated the grossest crimes, and believed the grossest errors. Therefore, does it evidently follow, that not what men usually call *conscience*, is the vindication of human judgment; but that conscience only, which is upright and enlightened. And it consequently follows again, that whoever believes

any system of religion, although he believe it with all the conviction of persuasion, and all the honesty of sincerity, yet if it be false, and repugnant to the injunctions of our great Legislator, he believes it at his peril, and at the risk of his eternal happiness. Why, in reality, is a false conscience any more an apology for error, than it is an apology for vice? In religion, both are reprobated with great severity. Or, why, is a false conscience an excuse for error, before the tribunal of the Divinity, when it is not admitted as an excuse for the non-observance of civil laws, before the tribunal of a civil magistrate?

I have hitherto deduced my arguments in condemnation of liberty of belief, not from the *internal* nature of religion—its mysterious dogmas and impenetrable truths, but from its *external* injunctions—the commands and threats with which its observance is enforced. Besides these, which ordain its cultivation and belief under the pains of reprobation, and should, therefore, appear sufficient to awe liberty and restrain the mind from evagation, there are other motives, also deduced from its *internal* nature, which, whilst like the commands and threats, they render the necessity of belief indispensable, render, also, the liberty or latitude of belief, besides criminal, *inconsistent*. Before I proceed to shew the causes of this inconsistency, I will, in few words, point out—the sub-

ject indeed requires it—the properties of that great and distinguishing attribute of man, *human reason*; ---that attribute, whose privileges and properties are adduced as another vindication, and the best vindication, likewise, of liberty of belief. Of this attribute I wish to speak with veneration and respect. I wish neither to contract its dominion, nor lessen its influences. Let its dominion and its influences reach where they may---the farther they reach the better---provided they do not outreach the dominion and the influences of wisdom. Even of the errors of reason I wish to speak with tenderness.---Man, then, is a rational agent. As rational, it is not only his privilege, it is his duty too, to employ his reason in the investigation of a multiplicity of objects, and in the attainment of various forms of knowledge. He is, for example, a member of society. In that capacity he has many moral and civil obligations to comply with, as a man, a citizen, and a subject; consequently he is bound to study and ascertain in the laws of nature, and by the instincts of wisdom, the methods by which these obligations are discharged, and their cultivation best promoted for the benefit of society. His reason is free in the study, opinions and adoption of these various methods, provided they do not militate against the interests of his fellow-man. He lives on a theatre that is crowded with stupendous things—the wondrous works of divine omnipo-

tence—astonishing the understanding, gratifying the senses, and exciting in the mind sensations of gratitude and admiration for the Great Being, which called them into existence. These, too, reason may labour to comprehend; and if it please, like the genius of the immortal Newton or Descartes, form systems to explain their phenomena and their properties. Besides these, there are a multitude of other pursuits in the paths of science and the fields of literature;—objects and pursuits, which are measured to the capacity, and congenial to the inclinations of the human mind. These again, reason may cultivate with freedom; and, if it choose, soaring on the wings of fancy, delightfully lose itself in those imaginary regions which poetry has given to the muses. In short, upon these, and subjects such as these, the employment of reason is not only permitted, but if properly conducted laudable and wise. Yes; and although even it err, and form absurd opinions, there is in general, nothing in the error and absurdity that is criminal. It is even possible—and the circumstance has often happened—that an error may be useful—a nearer approximation to truth, and a hint which genius may improve into science. But, then, the cause of all this liberty and latitude of opinion in the cases which I have cited, is this—because in them all, reason acts *in her proper sphere*—because the objects which she investigates, and the truths which

she discusses, are in the order of natural things; commensurate, in some degree, to the measure of her faculties, and not prohibited by any positive injunctions of the Divinity, nor consequently, where there is nothing in them profane nor injurious to society, criminal in the eyes of the divinity.

But, cannot the divine wisdom establish an order of things distinct from that of nature, and superior to it;—a sphere, in which the truths and objects which it contains, are neither similar to those of reason, nor analogous to those of the senses;—a sphere, in which the truths are supernatural, and the objects mysterious— a sphere which God forbids the profane eye to attempt to penetrate, and which, therefore, whilst it is fruitless; it is criminal likewise, to attempt to penetrate? Doubtlessly he can establish a sphere of this description. Well, and has he really established such? If he have, then is there evidently an inconsistency, as well as impropriety, in the liberty which undertakes, by the light of human reason, to measure its sacred objects. Yes,---and the protestant acknowledges it as we do, that such is the nature of the sphere of revelation. He acknowledges, that revelation is the communication made to mankind by the Divinity, of truths exceeding the measure of the human understanding---truths, which without comprehending, he is bound to believe, with the same firmness of assent, as if he perfectly understood

them. Obscurity, he considers an essential property in the objects of faith, and the quality, which gives to faith its merit and its deservings. In short, he acknowledges, that between the human eye and the objects of revelation, there is suspended a veil, which the profane hand of human curiosity is forbidden to attempt to draw aside, under the pain of *being overwhelmed with the glory which resides behind it.* Prov. xxv. 26. But, what therefore is the use of reason in the investigation of religion? Why, doubtlessly, not to comprehend objects, which it is already admitted, are incomprehensible; not to measure by the scale of natural things; truths, which are supernatural; nor, to ascertain by the testimony of the senses, what has no analogy with the senses. The use of reason in the investigation of religion, is to prove the existence and certitude of religion;—to appreciate the motives, which render it credible; and to convince wisdom, by the light of evidence, that its belief is necessary. The use of reason in the investigation of religion is to distinguish real from imaginary revelations; the will of God, from the artifices of men; and by the aid of those luminous maxims which our great legislator has inculcated, to ascertain which among the numberless institutions which crowd society, is “*the pillar and foundation of truth.*” This is the use, and these the proper functions of reason, in all religious investigation.

I have remarked in a preceding illustration, what, because it is important, and enters into the subject of this note, I will here repeat,—that in all the discussions of religion, the reasoner should bear constantly in his recollection, that there are two very distinct and very different kinds of objects to be considered; the objects which faith adores, and those (usually termed the *motives*) which recommend the objects of faith to our veneration. The objects which faith adores, are obscure; but the motives of faith plain—the former supernatural, and therefore incomprehensible; the latter natural, and therefore easy to be understood. It has pleased the divine goodness to shed beams of light upon the path which conducts to the sanctuary of truth,—beams bright enough to conduct to its threshold, the unprejudiced man, who does not shut his eyes to their gentle influence. I might have compared faith, and the motives which recommend it, to that pillar which God commanded to move before the Israelites, presenting a dark, and a bright side—a side invisible, and a side shining with the most effulgent rays of light. Such, precisely, is religion—dark in its truths, bright in the motives which recommend them—invisible in its mysteries; luminous in the arguments which establish them. Of course, again, these are the functions of reason—to discuss the motives which recommend religion: to contemplate the luminous evidences

which enforce it, and to follow them to the sanctuary to which they beneficently conduct. This, indeed, is all that reason is competent to perform. This done, her functions terminate; she has reached the boundary of her sphere, and arrived at the verge of that, in which a new order of things commences; which, bearing no resemblance to created things, renders the investigation of them fruitless. Whoever has wisely considered the end and nature of the christian dispensation, will allow, that such alone is the method in which its investigation should be conducted. The proper use and exercise of reason is to study its evidences, not its mysteries. It is in this sense, that belief is reasonable. It is in this sense, that St. Paul, who calls faith "*the substance of things not seen,*" and therefore not understood, exhorts the faithful to take care "*that their faith be reasonable,*" and it is in this sense, that the church, so far from condemning the investigation of religion, on the contrary, condemns the neglect of it as the source of superstition. The investigation of religion, thus conducted, produces piety; as its investigation, conducted on the latitudinarian principle of interrogating its mysteries, generates impiety.

The above principles, I have just said it, are not peculiar to the catholic; they are the general principles of all believers in revelation. And, hence, how contradictory, and at the same time, how

profane, are the reasoning and the conduct of those men, who admitting them in theory, reject them in practice; and erecting a tribunal in the little, but proud dominion of their own understandings, cite before it, not the evidences which alone they are competent to judge,—not the motives, which evince the truth or falsehood of catholicity, but its mysterious doctrines, and the divine truths which are impervious to human penetration. Certainly, such conduct in men, who admit and profess the preceding principles, is preposterous and wrong. Yes, and then, too, how do they proceed in the discussion of these mysterious doctrines? Why, they compare them with the truths of reason, and the objects of the senses; and because to the suggestions of their wisdom they do not appear to accord with either, they decide with an air of authority, solemn as if they were infallible, that they are false, foolish, idolatrous and criminal. Thus, I have shewn, in regard of the great mystery of transubstantiation, do Porteus and Secker, and a host of protestant divines, judge and determine its absurdity. Abandoning every wise principle, by which the truths of revelation should be discussed, they adopt, as the criterion of their decision, a principle as unbecoming as the insolence of reason could, in such circumstances, suggest. They judge of its reality by the testimony of the senses, and decide, that, because the senses do not attest its

reality, therefore it is absurd and ridiculous to believe it. Charlatanic reasoners! or rather worse far than charlatanic; profane reasoners! limiting the omnipotence of the Divinity, and establishing as a rule of judgment in religion, what is not, even always a correct one in nature. As if the author of the laws of nature could not suspend the laws of nature; or, as if the omnipotence of our great Redeemer could not, if his wisdom willed it, impart to mankind his sacred body under whatever form he chose. Reason should merely ask, whether he have really willed it; and by the light of those evidences which attest the existence of certitude, enquire whether he have really given it---not consulting the senses, the Eucharist is a mystery---not interrogating the laws of nature, the Eucharist is above them. Why, had the men, who take their senses for the guide and rule of their decisions, lived during the period while Christ conversed on earth, they would, in like manner, have decided---had they reasoned in like manner---that he was not God. Just, as now they say, the Eucharist is only bread, because it appears to be only bread---*the senses cannot deceive us*---just so, they would have said, Jesus is only man, because he appears to be only man---*the senses cannot deceive us!*---We abhor the profaneness of the unbeliever, who by reasoning, has reasoned away the doctrines of revelation; or who rejects all mysteries, because his ca-

capacity does not comprehend them ; yet do I seriously think, that there is nothing in their reasonings, that is worse reasoned ; nor in their incredulity, that is more profane, than the reasoning and incredulity of these bold empyrics. The reproach, which Pope makes to the profane judges of the ways of providence, might, with a trifling alteration, be applied to them.

These puny reasoners in the scale of sense,
Weigh their own weakness 'gainst omnipotence ;
Call folly, what their folly fancy such ;
Say, here, God does too little, there, too much ;
Snatch from his power his sceptre and his rod ;
Measure his greatness ; are the God of God.

In pride, in reasoning pride, there error lies,
They quit their sphere, and rush into the skies.

I do not wonder that during the fermentation and disorders of a revolution—and the reformation was such—the nature of religious liberty should not have been defined with accuracy ; nor its limits marked out with nice discrimination. The reformers owed their power, and the reformation its popularity and establishment, to the emancipation of reason from every principle of restraint. But, I do wonder, although the circumstance is certainly consistent with the maxims of the reformation, that at subsequent and calmer periods, when wisdom and moderation have contemplated all the properties of religious liberty, and measured all its

bearings, relations, and effects—I do wonder, that any should still define it, “*the privilege of believing and professing what each one pleases.*” Why do they not add to the definition, *and the right, likewise, of doing what each one pleases?* The mischief resulting from the threefold privilege might, eventually, have been greater, but the impropriety of the definition would have been nearly the same.—Let me then, however superfluous the discussion may appear, after the reflections which I have made on the nature of faith; and the proofs which I have adduced of the necessity of true faith—let me say a few words on the nature and properties of liberty in general; in order to deduce an inference respecting the nature and properties of religious liberty.

That man is free; that he is allowed to exercise his freedom; and that the exercise of his freedom is commendable, all this, if properly understood, is perfectly correct. Man is free; his liberty is the best, the noblest, the most happy prerogative of his nature; the source of his present comforts, and the principle of his future expectations. But, in what does this liberty consist? Has the beneficent Being, who has bestowed it on us, circumscribed it by no boundary, or raised no mound to restrain its violence,—for although, indeed, it is the best of our prerogatives, yet it is, also, the most active and the most impetuous? Certainly; the thing is evident—he did not bestow it for the purposes of

doing what is *wrong*, nor of *believing* what is *false*. Therefore, it is evident, that liberty has its boundaries; or to speak more philosophically, that liberty has its sphere. And what is the sphere of liberty? *Right*.—Here, then, presents itself the definition or idea of liberty. It consists in doing and believing what is *right*; and, therefore, not in doing and believing “*what we please*.” It is thus, that even in the pagan world many of its sages have defined and considered liberty. It is thus, that in society, the most enlightened legislators have determined and fixed the nature of civil liberty. Combining its nature and its prerogatives with the happiness and security of states, and with the general good, they make it consist in submission to the laws, and in obedience to equitable institutions. Thus, man is free, while wisdom is the guide and basis of his conduct; the citizen free, while he submits to just and useful laws; the child free, while he obeys the pious injunctions of his parent. Man, in reality in every state, circumstance and situation, is most properly free, and only properly free, while right and wisdom are his guides. When these cease to conduct him, he becomes the slave of prejudice, and the dupe of passion.

Whoever admits these notions of liberty---and they are the dictate of only common sense---will easily admit, that liberty must also have its boundaries in religion. Calculating, indeed, the na-

ture and end of religion, and combining these with the natural impulses of liberty and its tendency to excess, he will admit, that these boundaries should be circumscribed to an extremely contracted sphere. Religion is a system of humility and restraint; of self-abasement and diffidence; of dependence and order. Its end and aim are the subjugation of passion, by the privations of piety; and the conquest of pride, by the influences of submission. Its object is to subject man—the whole man—to the Divinity. For this purpose, while its moral and penitential discipline imposes restraints upon the *will*, its mysterious doctrines impose equal restraints upon the *understanding*; requiring, as in the case of the will, the tribute of entire obedience to the authority of the Almighty. It is to these motives we should refer those severe threats and injunctions of our Redeemer, which, in the former part of this illustration, I cited, ordaining belief—the belief of religion, just as his wisdom taught it, under the dreadful penalty of eternal reprobation. The consequence is, I think evident, that as in society, *civil liberty* consists in submission to the laws of the state; so religious liberty consists in humble, but wise obedience to the injunctions of religion, and in the firm belief of all her sacred doctrines.

Here then, let wisdom, if it can, while impressed with these maxims, reconcile with them the

wide, the immense, the boundless liberty, which protestantism confers upon its proselytes—upon the vicious, as well as the virtuous; upon the ignorant as well as the learned; upon the foolish as well as the wise—the liberty *to believe and profess just what each may please!* The mere statement of such liberty is almost a demonstration of its absurdity. It is absurd in religion, as the liberty of *doing* what each one *may please*, is preposterous in reason. Just as the latter liberty would subvert society—would be a volcano disgorging storms, and ravages, and destruction; so would the former destroy religion, and become the parent of errors and heresy, and impiety.

In reality, if setting aside all the arguments, which hitherto I have adduced to prove the inconsistency and impropriety of the protestant liberty of belief—if I had no other arguments to induce me to condemn it, but the mischiefs which it has produced, these alone would suffice to induce my reason to reprobate it. It will not be denied, that, whilst it is calculated to generate, it has actually generated all the forms of error, which credulity, at every period, has believed; and all the forms of heresy, which superstition has ever worshipped. It was this privilege, that, at the era of the reformation, even before the death of the great reformer, produced a countless multitude of systems of religion—was the parent of Lutheranism, Calvin-

ism, Anabaptism, Socinianism—rendering each of these great institutes a hundred-headed monster, and the parent of a thousand mischiefs. It is still this privilege, which, in our own times, is the source of nearly all the errors which wisdom laments, and religion weeps. The fanaticism of the methodist, the stupidity of the jumper, the canting nonsense of the various tabernacles and societies which crowd this island, all repose upon it. So indeed, I have proved elsewhere, do the profaneness of the deist, and the impiety of the atheist. These, in the long dark catalogue of evils resulting from them—seditions, wars, persecutions, enmities, injustice in every form—have their origin and motive, in the adoption and veneration of this privilege. So that calculating the evils only, which it has produced, and combining these with my notions only, of the wisdom of the great author of the christian institute, I feel an invincible repugnance to believe, that he could possibly have bequeathed to mankind as the guide of their belief, a prerogative so dangerous, so liable to abuse, and so pregnant with disorder.

Hence, I close the illustration with this counsel to the protestant—to consider seriously the nature and tendency of his own principles, and the nature and tendency of religion; and to compare and combine both together—compare together the independence of the former and the strictness of the

latter; the pride of liberty with the docility of faith. I exhort him to contemplate coolly the effects which his principles are calculated to produce, and which they have produced so often. With the feelings which these reflections will impress upon his mind, I again exhort him to interrogate his reason, whether it can wisely believe that such principles are divine. Interrogating his reason, it would tell him, that principles so bold and licentious, and which gravitate so strongly to abuse, can hardly be the principles, which the humble, the wise, and the beneficent Redeemer of mankind, would establish among his followers, as the leading maxims of their salvation. Interrogating his reason, it would tell him, that as truth, and unity, and order, are the *ends* of religion, so should the *means* of attaining and supporting these ends correspond to their necessity. Interrogating his reason, it would tell him, that the Being who has established authority as the safeguard of states, and the harmonizer and basis of civil society—who has commanded, that subjects shall pay obedience to princes, and submit to human laws—who under the Jewish dispensation ordained, that its members should “*do what the chair of Moses ordered*” (Matt. xxiii. 2.)—would not, under the most perfect and severe of all institutions—an institution, in which the salvation of man is united with the belief and integrity of truth, and with the humility of sub-

ordination---would not have deputed and sanctioned to him the proud and dangerous liberty of "*believing and professing what he pleases.*" If so, then is the wisdom of God less wise in the formation of religion, than in the regulations of civil governments, and he has done less for the peace of the church, than he has done for the tranquility of states.---Thus, interrogating his reason, and comparing circumstances and objects by the rules of analogy and the dictates of good sense, he will conclude, that since the liberty of protestantism is neither analogous in its nature to the nature of religion, nor in its bearings calculated to maintain the unity of truth, nor the harmony of subordination, therefore, must *authority*---that authority which protestantism has discarded, and which catholicity alone reveres, be the guide and guardian, the rule and arbiter of the faith and piety of the believer, and the support and buttress of religion. This conclusion adopted, I need not say, that this other conclusion is evident---therefore, are submission to the injunctions of the catholic church, and the belief of her doctrines, the means and the medium of salvation.

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